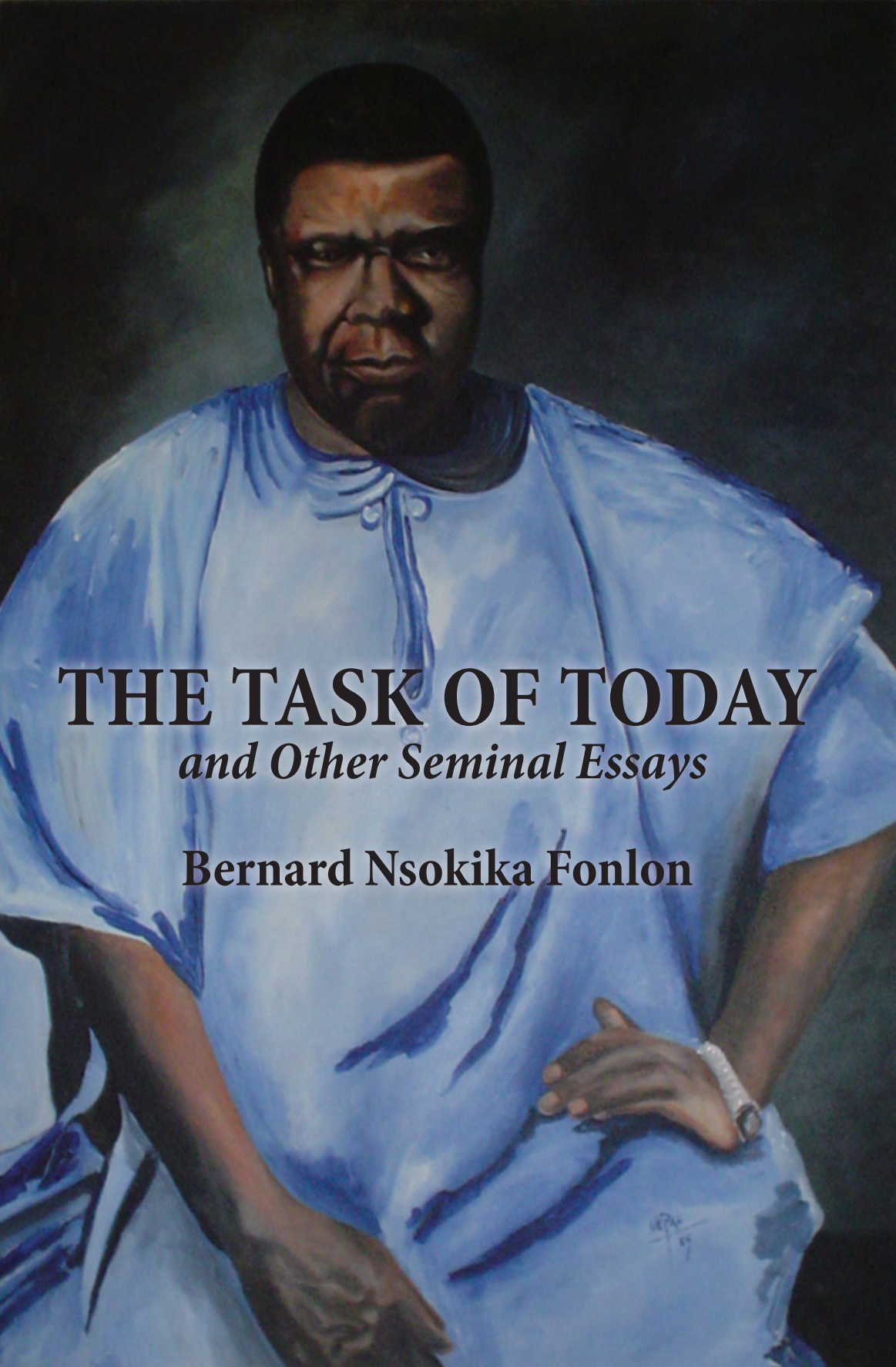




THE TASK OF TODAY

and Other Seminal Essays

Bernard Nsokika Fonlon

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A Word of Introduction

(First published in ABBIA, No.1, February 1963)

By Bernard FONLON

There is in man an inborn thirst to know the facts about the world, - there is in him the urge to seek what is good for his being, and to shrink back from what is harmful to his welfare; there is the desire, native to him, to give lasting expression to the feelings which well up within him, both when he is buoyed up and exultant and when he collides with misfortune; there is the deep-seated urge to reproduce and enshrine the manifold excellence that he sees in the world.

In other words, there surges in every human being an inborn thirst for the true, the good and the beautiful.

Because the nature of man is the same in all, people living together and exposed to the same influences and struggling like one man for Lebensraum in space and time, become, as it were, one body corporate worked upon and urged along by the same internal and external forces and responding, in a body, to these forces, as its members do individually.

Thanks to this thirst for the true, the good and the beautiful welling up in men, severally and corporately, each community, using the various and cumulative efforts and achievements of its members, gradually builds up, for itself, a body of facts about things, a philosophy or system of opinion about the world, an ethic to guide its corporate life and ensure the common good, a corpus of ideas to direct their imitation and expression of the multiform beauty that they see in the world.

Every people, therefore, possesses, in however rudimentary a form, its Science, its *Weltbild*, its Mores, its Aesthetic. It is all this, taken together, that we call the tradition of a people, the culture of a people.

Culture is to a nation like a soul to a man, that is, the principle of unity, of life and continuity.

A nation, therefore, is not merely so many millions of people inhabiting so many thousands of square miles and held together by the precarious grip of an external agent like a government.

A nation, thanks to its culture, is also, and essentially, a unit of thought and feeling.

Now and again, each community throws up, from among its masses,

individuals with special gifts of head and heart and hand, individuals who, because they see farther and deeper into themselves and into their world, individuals who, because they feel more keenly, more rudely, the thrill of communal joy, the shock of communal tragedy, individuals who, because they are gifted with language of -lasting beauty, become, as it were, the mouthpiece of the *Zeitgeist*.

And thus it happens that, when these geniuses, these scientists, writers and artists kneaded and leavened by the spirit of the times, express their inmost selves, they speak genuinely, automatically, for their nation and generation.

The mission of Africa's men of science and letters and art, today, is to salvage what can still be salvaged from our disparate, disintegrating, fast-disappearing past, to observe the forces, the influences working on their generation, to observe the reaction of the said generation to the said forces, to see what the dialectic of need commands us to borrow from the stranger, and then to weld these diverse elements together so that, from this welding, may evolve one dynamic culture for the African peoples.

Men fit for this mission are the crying need of the hour.

But they cannot be turned out at will like robots from a factory. For genius is like the spirit which "breathes where he wills". The most that we can do is to create the conditions which will enable such genius to strike root and flourish and come into flower, when it happens to sprout up among us.

If the Emperor Augustus came back to life and was asked what he considered his most enduring achievement, he would undoubtedly say that it was that he helped literature to blossom and bloom that he created the conditions in which a Horace, a Virgil could thrive. For the Augustan Empire is gone, but Virgil and Horace endure till today.

If Alexander the Great were asked what he considered his greatest privilege, I would not be surprised if he made answer that it was to have had Aristotle for his teacher. For the glory that was Greece is gone, but Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Thucydides, Sophocles, have been living, dynamic, cultural forces from their own day to this.

Augustus would regret today, surely, if, for some dim-sighted motive or other, he had marred Virgil and Horace instead of helping to make them.

No country however god-forsaken and forlorn is without its share of talent. Even when the prospect is bleakest, seeds of it are there, waiting for the ground to be broken and manured and watered.

*Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air
Some village Hampden that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood,
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood.*

It would be a misfortune for any country if a Milton from among its children went down mute into his grave, a crime, if it was his country itself that marred him.

In so far as culture is concerned, the policy of those responsible for the public welfare should be what Mao proclaimed at a rare moment, when the philosopher-poet in him took over from the politician:

Let a hundred flowers bloom !

That is why the Ministry of National Education deserves our deepest thanks for the impulse it has given to the launching of this cultural periodical.

Were I asked to suggest a motto for this Review, to lay down the principles that should guide those who undertake to contribute to its columns, I would have no hesitation whatsoever; I have already made these principles the burden of this article, namely, the transcendental principles of being : *Verum*, *Bonum*, *Pulchrum* -the True, the Good and the Beautiful.

If by saying that a man tells the truth, nothing more is meant than that he speaks his mind, such a definition would equate truth merely with sincerity and would be only one third correct. For a man can be profoundly sincere and still be mistaken about the facts. Truth has not only a moral, but also a logical and an ontological aspect, that is, it should exist not only in expression, but also in the mind and in things.

The truth of a thing in itself is that the said thing should correspond to the nature that it is supposed to have. In this sense, a false tooth is not a tooth, an imitation rose is not a rose.

The mind possesses the truth, if what it thinks about a thing agrees with what that thing is in itself.

For truth to be complete, therefore, in any given case, there must be agreement between expression and thought, thought and thing.

In practice, then, before a person, who wants to be wholly truthful, makes a statement, especially in an important affair, he will first of all exclude doubt and error and put his mind in certitude, by leaving no stone unturned to get the facts. For an assertion in science is like a statement in court in the sense that it must bear the brunt of cross-examination and be borne out by objective evidence.

In writing for this Review, we will aim, therefore, at soundness of doctrine and, for sound doctrine, research is imperative.

Truth, as a basic quality of things, belongs to their being: if a thing is, if it exists, it is true. Goodness, as an objective property of being, presupposes truth and refers to the make-up of things, to their constitution : if a thing has all the parts and qualities that it should have, if it possesses them in full measure, it is good; if not, it is bad, that is, faulty, deficient, lacking in something essential. The apposite of objective goodness, therefore, is defect, the absence of something that ought to be there.

It is therefore imperative, first, that subjects for these columns should be treated fully, not in the sense that they should of necessity be treated at length, but in the sense that no facts that belong to the very essence of the subject should be held back. It is therefore imperative, secondly, that subjects for these columns should not be twisted to serve any partisan purpose.

For this Review is founded on the principle that it shall serve but culture, and serve it alone, and serve it impartially, and serve it scientifically; that it shall, on no account, be made the mouthpiece of any particular interest or persuasion.

Truth and goodness demand for this Review soundness of doctrine; and soundness of doctrine demands, in its turn, intellectual honesty.

Beauty presupposes truth and goodness and, as an objective property of being, it refers to shape, to form. For it to exist in any thing, that thing must attain its fullest development. Things diminutive, stunted or dwarfish cannot be beautiful, therefore.

Furthermore, beauty demands that, in the arrangement of the parts of the said thing, there should be that order that is variously referred to as proportion, symmetry, harmony. Things lopsided, ungainly, incongruous, grotesque, discordant, cannot be beautiful.

Beauty demands, lastly, that the thing in question should radiate brightness, splendour, nobleness. Things dull and dreary, slovenly, mean, things lacking in physical or moral lustre, cannot be beautiful.

The test for things beautiful is that they give joy to the sight, to the sight

of the mind as well as to the sight of the eyes.

An elementary deduction from this, then, is that contributions to these columns should possess that solidness of substance, that correctness of form and that felicity of phrase that impress and please. Therefore, nothing vacuous, nothing shabby or slovenly, nothing that jars on ear and eye.

But we would be short-sighted and narrow if we aimed at nothing more than to pander merely to pleasure. Our aim should be levelled rather at the creation of that beauty which not only pleases but holds spell-bound and breathless, that beauty which draws irresistibly to itself and drives to action, to imitation.

For the central aim in all our efforts in these columns should be to rouse Cameroonians to the urgent need for a culture with its roots deep in this soil, to make them cease to be mere consumers of cultural nourishment dished to them by the stranger and become, themselves — makers of things true and good and beautiful, creators of culture scientists, writers, artists. We should hold up to their gaze, not the beauty that merely tickles, but beauty charged with power; like the beauty of a Niagara; like the beauty of a tiger, like the beauty of a jet air-liner.

When you see that masterpiece of shape and power sweeping through the skies, you see concrete proof that such beauty exists not only in things material but also in the realm of thought; a thing so beautiful, so powerful can only have sprung from ideas equally beautiful, equally powerful. For it must never be forgotten that any such thing, however tremendous its size, took birth as a dimensionless, imponderable idea in somebody's mind. Dimensionless and imponderable indeed, but tremendously powerful notwithstanding.

Beauty charged with power, therefore, is found in embodied being, found in the world of ideas. It also exists in the moral order, that is, in the character of men, in the achievements of the world's great souls and heroes.

When you see a Socrates at his trial, serene and joyful in the presence of injury and death and the lamentations of his friends, you see beauty and power in human character — a hero victorious over fate.

In brief, therefore, our purpose should be to goad and rouse our country's youth to aim at the very highest and best in everything they undertake to achieve — scientific learning, technical know-how, artistic skill, literary skill, and, most important of all, a manly, noble character. We should get it driven deep into their minds, as Dr. Aggrey of Ghana was wont to say, that

Only the best is good enough for Africa.

We should never tire of telling them what an English nobleman once told a group of students in the University of Aberdeen:

*Keep always with you,
wherever you course may lie,
the company of great thoughts, the inspiration of great ideals, the
example of great achievements, the consolation of great failures;
thus equipped you can face,
without perturbation,
the buffets of circumstance,
the caprice of fortune
or the inscrutable vicissitudes of life.*

This is not just pious talk. It is a categorical imperative, it is sanest wisdom for a country like ours that is young and poor, with all its tasks still undone. Has such a country not the right to call upon its youth for the highest and best in effort and sacrifice?

For think of this : What will happen to this country if our average citizen sets his ambition on nothing higher than a Mercedes-Benz or a comfortable post from which his inflated ego can lord it over the rest of his less fortunate brethren ?

And yet, youth is essentially generous, and full of lofty ideals, and, where two roads open before them, a high road and a low road, the chances are that they will flock to the high and abandon the low.

When a greater and more ennobling enterprise is on foot, said the Irish patriot, James Fintan Lalor, when a greater and more ennobling enterprise is on foot, every inferior and feeble project or proceeding will soon be left in the hands of old women, of dastards, imposters, swindlers, and imbeciles. All the strength and manhood of the nation — all the courage, energies, and ambition — all the passion, heroism, and chivalry — all the strong men and strong minds, — all those that make revolutions will quickly desert it, and throw themselves into the greater movement, throng into the larger and loftier undertaking, and flock round the banner that flies nearest the sky. There go the young, the gallant, the gifted, the daring; and there, too, go the wise. For wisdom knows that in national action littleness is more fatal than the wildest rashness; that greatness of object is essential to greatness of effort, strength, and success.

Part I

Nightmare

Nightmare

(First published in *ABBLA* No.3, September 1963)

I stood on the verge, the verge of the cliff,
and gazed down the chasm dizzy and black.

Libera me, Domine,
de ore leonis,
de lacu profundo.

I danced on the brink, the brink of
perdition, the grim dance of death
ecstatic and fatal.

Libera me, Domine,
de morfe improvisa, de poenis *inferni*.

I struggled to flee the lethal attraction, but it
drew like a magnet and I loved my undoing.

Libera me, Domine,
de morte eterna, in die tremenda.
I floundered in mire, the mire of
the bog that sucks into silence,
the silence of death.
Libera me, Domine,
ne absorbeat Tartarus, ne cadam in

Obscurum.

I sweated, I groaned,
the deeper I sank,
but like hogs in the filth, I cherished the
mire.

Asperges hyssop
et ego mundabor;
lavabis, Domine,
et super nivem dealbabor.

I trembled to think that this was
the end, that thus I was sinking into
ruin forever!

Cor mundum innova, O Deus, *in me, et*
spiritum rectum in visceribus meis.

I struggled to rise; so firm was the will, so
weak were the limbs! And I struggled in vain.

Libera me, Domine
spiritus, promptus, caro, infirma!

I woke in the morning and wondered and
sighed; I rose from the mire, sadder and wiser.

Redde mihi, Domine, iuam
laetitiam, in die lacrymosa.

O Safe and Unwary, awake to your fortune!
keep far and forever, from fenland and
cliff.

Deus,

*sine cuius numine,
nihil est in homine,
nihil, innoxium,
da rubor,
fer auxilium.*

Bernard Fonlon
Yaoundé, March 1963

Part II
Random Leaves from My Diary

A Foreword Bonitas, Disciplina, Scientia

Back in 1945, at the close of my course as a junior seminarian in Christ-the-King College, Onitsha, where I had done my secondary school studies; an idea got into my head to keep a diary. The first entry in it is dated Thursday, the 13th of December, 1945, the very day I quit the school, after finishing the Senior Cambridge exams.

Under its celebrated Principal, the Reverend Father Michael Flanagan, C.S.Sp. (R.I.P.), Christ-the-King College was bent on instilling and inculcating, to the letter, its motto of Goodness, Discipline and Knowledge. And the *Disciplina* was what got the greatest and sternest emphasis in practice.

Caning was the order of the day. And woe betides you if your name got into the weekly black book for low marks or for misbehaviour. Then, it did not save you from the birch that you were a sixth-former nearing the end of your teens, or already in your early twenties!

All this discipline plus the Spartan life that the Seminary entail, as a matter of course, was not calculated to create a soft spot for the College, in our hearts. Yet, according to that first entry, as the mammy-wagon, in which I rode, sped past the school, I felt a pang of regret for going. Ever since then, none of the institutes of learning, that have shared in my reading and in the shaping of my mind, evokes so much affection in me as Christ-the-King College; and this precisely because, determined to live up to its motto of *Bonitas, Disciplina, Scientia*, it made us live the Spartan life that discipline entails. For, as after years came and went, it was born in upon me, deeper and 'deeper, how indispensable discipline is, in the life of man; that is, discipline of mind and heart and will; discipline which is not imposed, from without, by external forces striking fear, but wells from within, that is, from firmly instilled convictions and principles. Without this discipline, there can be no Goodness; and Science (even in its original sense of Knowledge at large), is rendered worthless, if not positively pernicious and dangerous to human society. Today, when I think of the term *Alma Mater*, it is Christ-the-King College which springs up foremost in my mind, and stirs, within me, sentiments of deep affection and gratitude.

I have no inside knowledge of secondary schools in Cameroon; for, the last time I taught in one, in this country, was back in 1946 and 47. That was in Sasse. There too, at that time, the discipline was triply Spartan, because the natural conditions on the bleak mountain side were very severe, and students were poor in the extreme. Their life made our Christ-the-King College brand of discipline, for all its harshness and birching, look like Sunday School. For, in addition to preparing for the Senior Cambridge, the boys, in Sasse, did daily manual labour, (cutting the grass, cleaning the classes) built their own kitchens (the founding students, under the late Father Aloys Schgoer, had even built their own dormitories!), cooked their own food; and, on that stony, flinty, chilly mountain side, few of them had shoes; and these were worn only on special occasions.

Some of the finest Cameroonians I know — for academic achievements, for a keen sense of responsibility, for integrity, for a high spirit of public service — are from among those who went through the Sasse of those days.

As I said above, I have no first hand knowledge of the inside of our secondary schools today. Obviously, I would be looked upon as queer and crazy, if I sounded the clarion call for a complete return to the former Sasse Spartanism. Still, what I do say and stress is this; that it is categorically imperative that other ways should be found for instilling and inculcating Discipline of mind, and heart and will, in the students of today; else, this country is headed for chaos and catastrophe,

However, let me go back to my diary.

The Showdown

For seven years, I limited myself merely to recording passing events that struck, or shook me, like the tragic death of my intimate friend of long years, Chrysantus Yange, who was murdered between Mbalmayo and Ebolowa, in the August of 1948. Before that brutal murder, I had left Sasse and had arrived at St. Paul's Senior Seminary at Okpuala, Owerri, at about 5 at dusk, on Friday, the 9th of January, 1948, to continue my studies in Philosophy and Theology for the Catholic Priesthood.

For the first two years in this institute, things went on very smoothly. Then, in 1950, a new Rector took over, and things began to change. In January 1951, we moved up to Enugu to become the first *alumni* of Bigard Memorial Seminary. As days grew into weeks, and the weeks into months, and the months into years, I felt, more and more, that there was something going increasingly wrong with the new administration.

The Rector was a very good and saintly man, extremely kind, and keen on running the institute along what he believed to be the best possible lines. Everything he did, or said, was done and said in the unshakable belief that it was for the good of the students, and for that of the future native priesthood. For this, from thence till day, I think of him with thoughts of affection and gratitude.

Unfortunately, however, in addition to this unshakable faith in the lightness of his rule, he had a very short temper; and to make things worse, there was very little contact between the black students and the white faculty, outside of class-room and conference hall, in spite of the meagre numbers in fact we were less than thirty! And certain things were said and done, on the part of the authorities that alienated the students, and widened the gulf between the administration and the boys. And things were worsened by this that the students had no venue for venting their views. And I saw dissatisfaction and disaffection and frustration mounting.

By June 1952, I was convinced that something must be done about it, that someone must speak up to right the situation and avert the danger. But who? And how? Yet, I saw clearly that to form a group of malcontents, and risk many students being dismissed, as ringleaders, was the wrongest way to go about it.

So I decided to do it myself.

I decided to put the case, as clearly as possible, in carefully chosen words. And with this in view, I drew up a memorandum, intended for the Rector.

For over a fortnight, I read this document over and over again, cross-examining my conscience, to find out whether what I had written was based on mere imagination, or did it rest on solid, concrete facts; on objective evidence. What was the worst that could befall me for this rash step? The sack, of course! But I was convinced that, if angry counsels prevailed, and I was expelled, note would be taken of my observations, notwithstanding, and salutary changes would be wrought in the institute.

And that was what counted above all other considerations.

On Friday, the 20th of June, 1952, in the afternoon, I walked up to the Rector's room and handed in my memo.

The result was immediate: an explosion of wrath. He was stunned and shocked, as I had never seen him before, in the ten years during which I knew him; and the fact that this calling to question of his rule came from me, a student for whom he had shown especial kindness through these years, wounded him; and deep.

It hurt me too; indeed, I was sore and keen to see how deep I had hurt a man, who had been exceptionally good to me for ten years and more.

He summoned the students at once into the auditorium and spoke at length and bitterly. He said it was a sign of signal indiscipline that he should be criticised in this way; the Archbishop must hear of this. But only one student in the whole hall knew and understood what he was talking about myself. The rest sat completely dumbfounded, for he mentioned no name.

My soul was plunged into anguish, although *my* conviction about; the tightness of what I had “done remained unshaken. I was to be dismissed right away, but one thing prevented this: the fact that, instead of fomenting trouble among” the students, I had addressed myself, direct and confidentially, to the rightful authority; and had not made myself the mouthpiece of a disgruntled group. The rest of the faculty took careful note of this, and counted it a credit.

So the storm blew over. But I knew that one wrong step, however slight, would mean my undoing. And so it was: the ouster came the following year.

The Turning Point

But that Friday, the 20th of June, 1952, marked the beginning of a new period in my life: for, though convinced that my action was unquestionably meek and just, I began, increasingly, to focus the searchlights of my mind on my own soul to see, as lucidly and as clearly as I could, whether all was well therein.

And I found that all was not.

As a consequence of this heart-searching, I began asking myself some searching questions; and the following were the cardinal ones.

Since, often, in the future, situations, such as that from which this crisis had sprung, must arise, when I shall have to take decisions, stern, and costly, and painful, and fraught with far-reaching consequences; what principles must I adopt to guide me, on such occasions so that, before and after, I could remain, unmoved, unshakable peace of mind, whatever betide?

Since life is so inscrutable, the future hid and uncertain; since years of success and promising labour can, all of a sudden, come crashing down in dismal failure and despair, leaving you bewildered, stunned, ruined, unknowing what to do, unknowing where to turn; what laws can one lay down to, fortify oneself, to keep one's head, in such crises, in order to gather up courage, and gather up the pieces, and start afresh, and face the bleak future with equanimity?

Since in the course of life, one is ineluctably bound to meet or live with those, who, for one reason or another, will strive to frustrate you, will treat you, not merely with covert hostility, but even with overt antagonism, and do all in their power to provoke you, to besmear you, to make your heart fester; what sane, salutary attitude, of soul and mind, should one cultivate, to brace one's energies up, to meet such circumstances?

It is not rare in life that a friend of long standing turns traitor and stabs you as Brutus stabbed Caesar; or sells you to the foes; sometimes people whom you have served, to whom you have done many a signal favour, completely, fail to show any sign of appreciation, or, what is worse, openly assert that you have never done anything for them; sometimes, people will come grovelling in the very dust before you, for help, only to rise up, spiteful and insolent; sometimes a person whom you have helped nine times, but whom you cannot help the tenth time, completely forgets the past favours, and bears you a rankling grudge, as though serving him were a duty that you owed him at every turn; sometimes you do your very best and expect congratulations, but, to your utter stupefaction, you are roundly denounced, disavowed and condemned instead; what principles of life should be your mainstay to help you avoid becoming confused, and hurt, and bitter, when such should betide?

Since (at least in those days of scarce education) the few of us who were blessed with the privilege of a chance, had the duty to serve our people, to lead them, if the need arose; — what spirit should animate us, in that service; what principle should guide us, in that leadership; what should we do to prepare ourselves for it adequately; what attitude should we adopt in our bearing towards our less privileged brethren?

In a word, by what principles of life can we acquire, preserve, and strengthen, a Peace of Soul, unruffled and constant, in a world, where you are constantly mauled and floored; where misunderstanding, ingratitude, greed, selfishness, wickedness and cruelty are rank and rife; where the struggle to be good looks, *a priori*, foredoomed — a bootless, thankless enterprise?

Thus it was that, from that fateful day, Friday, June the 20th, 1952, the nature of the entries in my diary changed. It became, not merely a haphazard record of passing events, but, above all a diary of ideas provoked, in the main, by the above questions. Whenever one such idea struck me, I noted it down, pondered it over, scrutinized its implications and complications, and finally elaborated, in such wise that it should firmly grip my heart and mind, a

principle of thought and action, a Law of Life, and set it down to serve as a constant reminder, in the after-time. Ever since then, when a critical situation has arisen, requiring a stand to be taken, a decision to be made, I have turned to the relevant rule to 'see what to do, and brace up my soul for the action and its consequences.

The World Without

The section of my diary, from which these leaves are culled dates from the 8th of December, 1952, to Monday, the 6th of September, 1954, some twenty, years ago. Now, the pertinent question that the reader would ask me, after perusing these leaves, would be: What has been your experience in trying to live up to these rules? "Has it been easy; has it been hard going?

I will attempt to make answer by examining what I have gone through, in the world without me; and in the world within me, during this period.

I will begin with a request: Look around you, and answer the following questions for yourself, and do so with candour:

Which runs riot, today, among the human kind: greed or generosity, cruelty or kindness, laissez-faire in public affairs or serious concern for the commonweal, heartlessness or compassion, hate or love, discord or harmony, war or peace, freedom or thralldom, order or chaos?

Which grows daily rifer and ranker: wickedness or goodness, treachery or faithfulness, fraud or honesty, thoughtlessness or consideration, intended sour-hearted thanklessness or deep, genuine gratitude?

Which do you encounter more often, in the wide world, today: tears, or laughter, despair or hope, enthusiasm or grinding frustration, cringing obsequiousness or dignified manliness, polished insincerity or refreshing forthrightness, overweening arrogance or courteous respect, morbid ambition or modest humility?

Is the promotion of the commonwealth spurred on by free dynamic action, or is it smothered and stifled by bureaucratic inertia, cynicism and immobility; is the slogan: the greatest good to the greatest number; or is it: everyman for himself?

Which wears the crown, and is adorned with laurels, and rides in triumph, and gets deafening popular plaudits: mindless mediocrity, or talent and expertise, blatant ineptitude, or thoroughness and efficiency?

In brief, which rules the world: muddle-headedness or deep and far-

seeing thought, callousness or sympathy, suspiciousness or understanding, evil or good, wrong or right, injustice or justice?

How are men regarded today: as soulless, worthless cyphers, as chattels to be disposed of at whim, as things to be sold; as brutes to be beaten and tortured and butchered: or as human beings, with inalienable rights; beings created in God's image and likeness, and therefore, endowed with an inherent dignity — beings with minds and hearts and wills of their own, with" their joys and sorrows, their hopes and fears?

I once read a book in my boyhood in which two characters, a young boy and an elder, were discussing the rough and ready world around them, and its selfish ruthless doings.

"It's a queer world," sighed the green, baffled youngster.

"Yes, indeed"; answered his travelled, disabused friend, *"God made it but- the devil rules it!"*

The psalmist exclaims that the heavens are telling the glory of God (and the men who won the moon have re-echoed his words); and order, in the universe, is wont to be preferred as a proof for existence of God. Order is the Universe! The universe of the multitudinous stars, and the myriad milky ways, and the endless space, expanding before the daring eyes of astronauts and cosmonauts — yes. But the world of men, this headlong, mad, ruthless world, where might is right, and it is "the weak to the wall"; — well, it bewilders you almost to the opposite conclusion; and you ponder and wonder: Is God there? Does he see? Does he care?

The Pirate's Profession of Faith

In *Treasure Island*, Robert Louis Stevenson's famous book for boys, there is a scene where a hardened buccaneer, Israel Hands, is discussing with the boy hero, James Hawkim.

"Cap'n," said he at length 'with that same uncomfortable smile, "here's my old shipmate, O' Brien; s'pose you was to have him overboard. I ain't particular as a rule, and I don't take no blame for settling his hash, but I don't reckon him ornamental now, do you?"

"I'm not strong enough, and I don't like the job; and-there he lies, for me," said I.

"This here's an unlucky ship, this *Hispaniola*, Jim," he went on, blinking, "There's a power of men been killed in this *Hispaniola* — a sight o' poor seamen dead and gone since you and me took ship to Bristol. I never seen such dirty luck, not I. There was this-here O'Brien now — he's dead, ain't

he? Well now, I'm no scholar, and you're a lass as can read and figure, and to put it straight, do you take it as a dead man is dead for good, or do he come alive again?."

"You can kill the .body, Mr.-Hands, but not the spirit; you must know that already" I replied. "O'Brien there is in another world, and may be watching us."

"Ah!" says he. "Well, that's unfortunate — appears as if killing parties was a waste of time. -Howsoever, sperrits don't reckon for much, by what I've seen. I'll chance it with the sperrits, Jim. And now, you've spoke up free, and I'll take it kind if you'd step down into that there cabin and get me a — well, a — shiver my timbers! I can't hit the name on't; well, you get me a bottle of wine, Jim — this here brandy's too strong for my head."

Hands lay as I had left him, all fallen together in a bundle and with his eyelids lowered as though he were too weak to bear the-light. He looked up, however, at my coming, knocked — the neck off -the bottle like a man who had done the same thing often, and took a good swig, with his favourite toast of "Here's luck!" Then he lay for quiet for a little, and then, 'pulling out a stick of tobacco, begged me to cut him a quid.

"Cut me a junk o' that," says he, for I haven't no knife and hardly strength enough, so be as I had. Ah, Jim, Jim, I reckon I've missed stays! Gut me a quid, as'll likely be the-last, lad, for I'm for long home, and no mistake."

Other Activities

I. After renewal and reconciliation within the Church, we should go out to our separated Brethren (i.e. between Pentecost and Christ the King) with joint Bible services, collections, shared prayer meetings.

II. Penance, perhaps GIVING to orphans, starving poor — but organized specially.

Schools and Colleges

They could help in processions; collecting, family prayers Rosary, ecumenical activity — the fallen away.

"Well" said I, "I'll cut you some tobacco, but if I was you and thought myself so badly, I would go to my prayers like a Christian man,"

"Why?" said he. "Now, you tell me why."

"Why?" I cried. "You were asking me just now about the dead. You've broken your trust; you've lived in sin and lies and blood; there's a man you killed lying at your feet this moment, and you ask me why! For, God's mercy, Mr. Hands, that's why."

I spoke with a little-beat thinking of the bloody drink he had hidden in his pocket and designed, in his ill thoughts, to end me with. He, for his part, took a great draught of the wine and spoke with the most unusual solemnity.

"For thirty years" he said, "I've sailed the seas and seen good and bad, better and worse, fair weather and foul, provisions running out, knives going, and' what not. Well, now I tell you I never seen good come o' godness yet. Him as strikes first is my fancy; dead men don't bite; them's my views —

*Amen, so be it."*¹

The Psalmist's Dilemma

This bewildering phenomenon of the unhampered victory of wickedness in the world, bewildered not only the carefree and callous "gentleman of fortune"; -it also baffled and tormented the mind of the pious, saintly author of Psalm 72;

"What Bounty God shows, what divine bounty, to the upright, to the pure of heart! Yet I was near losing my foothold, felt the ground sink under my steps, such heartburning had I at seeing the good fortune of sinners that defy his laws; for them, never a pang; healthy and sleek their bodies show. Not for these to share man's common lot of trouble; the plagues which afflict human kind still pass them by. No wonder if pride clings to them like a necklace, if they flaunt, like fine clothes, their wrong-doing. From those pampered hearts what malice proceeds, what vile schemes are hatched! Ever jeering, ever talking maliciously, throned in high they preach injustice; their clamour reaches heaven, and their false tales win currency on earth!

Enviously the men of my own race look on, to see them draining life's cup to the full; can God, they ask, be aware of this? Does the most High know of all that passes? Look at these sinners, how they live at peace, how they rise to greatness! Why then, thought I, it is to no purpose that have kept my heart true, and washed my hands dean in pureness of living; still, all the while, I am plagued for it, and no -morning comes but my scourging is renewed."

But he pulled himself together and pondered long and deep, and prayed with earnest fervour, being in dire contusion and distress;

"Was I to share their thoughts?" he questioned himself. "Nay, that were to

¹ Robert Louis Stevenson. *Treasure Island*, the Signet Classics: pp. 154, 156 — 157

put the whole company of thy children in the wrong! Set myself to read the riddle, but it proved a hard search, until I betook myself to God's sanctuary, and considered, there, what becomes of such men at last. The truth is, thou art making a slippery path for their feet, ready to plunge them in ruin; in a moment they are fallen, in a storm of terrors vanished and gone. And thou, Lord, dost rise up and brush aside all their imaginings, as a waking man his dream."

Prayer brought enlightenment, and enlightenment firmer faith, and faith pulled him out of despondency and despair; and he saw that, whatever betide, that however rough, and arrogant and ruthless evil may ride, good will triumph in the end, and evil shall be vanquished, if we but cling to God:

What if my mina, (he pondered and wondered), was full of bitterness, what if I was pierced to the heart? I was all dumbness, I was all ignorance, standing there like a brute beast in thy presence. Yet ever thou art at my side, ever holdest me by my right hand. Thine to guide me with thy counsel, thine to welcome me into glory at last. What else does heaven hold for me, but thyself? What charm for me has earth, here at thy side? What though flesh of mine, heart of mine, should waste away? Still Cod will be my heart's stronghold, eternally my inheritance. Lost those others may be, who desert thy cause, lost-are all those who break their troth with thee; I know no other-content-but clinging to God, putting my trust in the Lord, my Master; with the gate of royal Sion I will be the herald of *thy praise*.² Such, by divine revelation, was the psalmist's profession of faith; the verdict of God Himself.

The Good Must Win

Yes, wickedness, however haughty, heartless, ruthless, arrogant, invincible, and victorious it may ride, it boomerangs, more often than not, on its doers. I have seen, with these my eyes, men who rode high, who rode rough shod on the weak and defenceless — I have 'seen' such men, in a sudden, dramatic turn of fortune, swift as a flash of lightning, hurled down from the lofty heights and brought: to nought. Read History, even recent History, and you will see this phenomenon fulfilled, again and again.

In the heyday of his power, the Italians said, cynically, of *Duce*: Mussolini is always right! But it was the same Italians who danced when they hanged him, like a hog, and dumped his body in the gutter. And when you have seen powerful men, who become demigods, whose mere presence set men

² Psalm 72 (73): The Knox Version: 1 — 28.

quaking, who struck terror in the hearts and minds of millions — when you have seen such men, brought low, rendered helpless even by death, that is the common lot of all, you really wonder with the poet who exclaimed :

O why should the spirit of mortal be proud!

My Humble Experience

I am a man in the middle years. I am a schoolmaster by training and bent. I began my active life, as a pupil teacher, at the age of fifteen, back in January 1940, 33 years ago. Children whom I shared in bringing up, whom I taught, that is, are now top-ranking experts in various fields; some are intellectuals of sterling worth, who can pass as such anywhere in the world. I have studied in four famous institutes of higher learning. I have been a man in the public eye. I have seen the inside of power. I have tasted the honey and the gall of office. I have wielded authority. I have seen happy days, and times of storm and stress; I have been in the thick of many a nerve-racking show-down. Twice in twenty years, I have been given a dramatic kick-out whose echoes resounded far and lasted long. Yes,

*'Sometimes I am up,
Sometimes I am down,
Sometimes I am almost to the ground.'*

Thus I have had the privilege of penetrating and exploring many dimensions of human life. I have met goodness. I have met wickedness. I have seen many a treacherous stabbing-me-in-the-back. Still, curiously, (and a very puzzle to my own self), I have remained quite naive for my age.

Yet, after all these, I can say that I have seen something of the nature of things, and of the nature of men — else I am an incurable moron. And I can cite, with a good degree of authority, concrete cases to show that, though evil may ride high and make itself seen, and render good mute and invisible by many a heartless act, by its deafening din; It never pays in the end. My verdict is that, though we might have to be patient, and long-suffering, and wait for years on end, the seemingly dumb, weak and silent good will win at the last. I am convinced that it is worthwhile, even though it may be thankless, to be kind, and honest, and good, and just.

Fourth Instalment

As I said above, I can cite many cases to prove, that truth and honesty pay; but here let me give you an example that I lived through myself, though it may sound like blowing my own trumpet, and the cynic may say that one swallow does not make a summer.

Father William Butler C. S. Sp.

Back in 1951, when going to study in Europe, for us Africans, was as good as an ascent to heaven, the professors of Bigard Memorial Seminary, Enugu, proposed that I should go to complete my course in Rome. The grape-vine hummed it, for months, that I was sure to go; in fact everyone, who heard, took it as a matter of course, and as rather in the nature of things. But officialdom kept a stony silence. Then, on Tuesday, the 20th of November, 1951, the Rector, Fr. John James O'Neill, summoned me to his office and told me, with sorrow in his voice, that they of the Seminary had decided that I should go to Rome, but that Bishop Rogan and his Council in Cameroon had turned their proposal down. (I later heard that the reason for the veto was that I was not humble enough to bear the weight of a Doctorate).

Naturally, I felt deeply hurt and humiliated and disappointed, after all the ballyhoo and the great expectations. But I pulled myself together, and in a deep act of faith and submission, I said this prayer: *“O God, If it is your will that I should one day, study in Europe, I will; no power on this earth shall stop it.”*

But, there-after, I wiped such ambitions clean out of my mind.

Three years later, after leaving Bigard with my course unfinished, and was teaching in Christ-the-King College, and drudging for university exams as an external candidate, I applied to the C. D. C. for a bursary to do a degree in a university. At that time, the Corporation was the only body in the Southern Cameroons with scholarships to dole out; and this they did rather niggardly. My academic background was deemed solid, my credentials good, and I was highly recommended by people whose authority and honour and honesty could not be called to question. And going by these criteria, I could not see how they could refuse me an award.

Notwithstanding, early in July 1954, I received a letter from the Board saying that they agreed my achievements and credentials were excellent, but that they regretted that they were unable to award me a scholarship.

Thus, a second time for me, hopes that looked like very virtual

certainties, were shattered to pieces. And a second time I knelt down and said the same prayer of faith and submission.

And I wiped the ambitions, once more, clean off my mind.

Then one day, shortly after, Father William Butler, the then principal of Christ-the-King College, called me and offered me the surprise of a scholarship to go to study in Ireland and come back to teach in the College.

What a windfall! However, almost instinctively, something deep within me told me to decline his kindness. He had a large heart, had Father William Butler. If I have become anything since then, it is to him that I owe it, first and foremost, under God. Naturally, he was taken aback by my refusal, knowing, as well as he did, my deep yearning to study overseas and the recent set-back I had had.

Look, Father, I said to him, I have spent the best years of my youth here in Nigeria. If I accept your offer, it will mean that I must come back to Christ-the-King College to teach for years; and by the time I am done, the best of my days will be gone; tell me, when will I be able to go back to serve my own people?

He was touched by what I said and heard me through with sympathetic understanding and allowed readily that I had a point.

But my fellow tutors, on the contrary, and naturally so, were utterly stunned. Here was everyone striving, tooth and nail, to study abroad; and, without the asking, a chance is offered to a fellow, on a very platter of gold, and he turns it down!

Ben, look here, they said to me, we are all Ibos; everyone of us would have danced in the very street for the chance you have been given; but we are all glad that it is to you that it has gone; and here you reject it out of hand, because you want to return to Cameroon; man, are you mad!

It all looked very stupid on my part; there was no logic or sense in my stand — or, at least, so it seemed. But there was ever that keen, small and persistent voice within me saying no; and I did what it said.

I could very well have fooled Father Butler and accepted his offer with thanks fulsome and profuse; but with the secret mind of refusing to honour my pledge on my return. But I shrank back with horror from such a thought.

Then, one day, two months later, (to be exact) on Thursday, the 9th of September, 1954, I met him casually and our conversation rambled from one thing to another. Then at one point, the kindly Irishman, suddenly, brought up the question again.

We wanted to help you, he said, but you refused our offer.

But Father, I told you how I felt.

Yes, indeed, and I think you are right.

Then, all of a sudden, a thought flashed into my mind; *Father*, I said, *a new constitution for Nigeria and the Cameroons is coming into force next October, and the Cameroons will have its own regional government. If I accept your offer, will such acceptance prevent me from applying to that government for a scholarship?*

He paused a while. *Why*, he said, *for my part, I do not see why we should impose such a condition on you. But I must see Father Jordan and the Bishop for the final word.* Father Jordan was an expert on school and college matters, and the Nigerian Federal Government had made him one of its Advisers on Educational Affairs. Archbishop Charles Heeley was a great man with an imposing Episcopal presence; he was also a great promoter of education, a tireless builder of schools and colleges. If Iboland is what it is today, in modern advancement, it is thanks, in a very large measure, to Archbishop Heeley. I salute his memory. But they were not notable for a soft spot in their hearts for ex-seminarians, these two! So I brushed all hope out of my mind and considered the case as good as doomed.

But two days later, on Saturday the 11th of September 1954, as I was sitting near my house, I saw a youngster running down towards me with a snow-white envelope. I opened it with trembling hands; and this is what I read (I have the original letter right before me as I write):

Dear Mr. Fonlon — I am glad to say the College will sponsor you for Arts in Cork University. The agreement will be as follows: when you return, qualified, you will teach at Christ-the-King College for two years for every one year for which you are sponsored. So, for example, if you get the scholarship after one year of being sponsored by the College, you would return to teach for two years.—This is the general procedure.

— William Butler, Principal.

A month later, I took my seat in the lecture hall in University College Cork, one of the Constituent Colleges of the National University of Ireland.

I had never been the recipient of such large-hearted generosity before; indeed so large and free was it that no formal agreement was ever drawn up and signed to legalise it!

Had I stifled the nay-saying voice within me and jumped with eager deceitfulness at Father Butler's initial unqualified offer, I would have been bound to come back, after three years, merely with a B. A. But, as it was, thanks to Dr. Endeley's Government, which gave me a scholarship, one year after, and made me free, I was able to study, not only in the National

University of Ireland, but also in the Sorbonne in Paris, and at Oxford University. Thus this frankness enabled me to come back home, not merely with a B. A. Honours, but with an M. A. Honours, an Oxford Diploma in Education, and a Ph. D. into the bargain.

And what was I? A penniless son of pauper peasants from way up in the Cameroon heartland.

From these series of events, and from many similar more, ever since; from these ups and downs, these alternations of long harrowing frustrations and final triumph, I became convinced that honesty is the best policy. I became convinced that Faith and Submission to God, however bleak and black the future may be, will, in the end, be richly rewarded. I became convinced that if what we pray for, with deep fervour and earnestness is not granted, we can take it, as categorically certain, that this refusal is for our good. Sometimes God does us the kindness of saving us from ourselves! For, often, hindsight shows us that what we yearned and craved for, as for our good, would really have been our ruin. How often does it happen that the anguish we detest and struggle to flee from, as from woe and misfortune, turns out to be, not the bane we believed, but a veritable boon. I have learnt that, if we put, our fate in God's hands, we can rest assured that it is in good hands. Men endowed, to the full, with this faith can retain unruffled Peace of Soul even in the depths of heart-rending fate. Many a priest who has seen men dying joyfully in the very pangs and throes of death, can bear witness to this assertion.

The World Within

The second question is: What has been my intimate experience, in the world within me, these twenty years, in the strife to keep my code.

I make answer that, it is when you arise determined to struggle to be good, to strive for a degree of perfection, that it dawns upon you how really weak and helpless you are. And the words of Christ ring in your ears with unwonted and reinforced certitude: *Sine me, nihil potestis facere*; without me, you can do nothing.

It baffles your own eyes to see how low you can fall from the lofty heights you have chosen to scale, how far you can stray from the high road you have elected to tread; how short you can fall of the sublime ideals you have espoused and set as the targets of your moral aims; and this, sometimes,

in despite of effort and prayer.

And in anguish and confusion, you raise your voice with the psalmist in plaintive lament:

Ashes are all my food, I drink nothing but what comes to me mingled with my tears; I shrink before thy vengeful anger, so *low thou hast brought me, who didst once lift me so-high*.³ Ever since youth, misery and mortal sickness have been my lot; wearily I have borne thy visitations; I am overwhelmed with thy anger, dismayed by thy threats, that still cut me off like a flood, all at once surrounding me. *Friends and neighbours gone, a world of shadows is all my company*.⁴ The extracts which I have decided to deliver, to the readers of *Panorama*, from my musty papers, are intimately personal, and were intended for no other eyes but for mine alone; and, so they have remained, for twenty years and more. It is therefore with regret and reluctance that I hold them up to the general gaze. But if one single soul (and I say *one single soul* very sincerely) shall find in them a ray of light, shall be stirred to noble effort and achievement thereby, I shall consider myself to 'be richly rewarded for the embarrassment that the publishing of these leaves entails.

Besides their private nature, another reason which makes me uneasy about them is the emphatically assertive first person style in which they are written. I don't like the I, I, I, that you will meet *ad nauseam* in almost every sentence. I hate that type of talk myself. But do bear with me and keep in mind that they were written in days of youthful, starry-eyed idealism and that you are only *overbearing* now what I was saying to myself, twenty years ago,

A more serious reason why I find the publishing of these papers such a humiliation¹ is my consciousness of the fact that I have failed, in serious measure, to live up to some of these principles. Yet, if the man is weak, the ideas, as I see them, are sound and strong; and, where I have failed, a stouter soul may succeed.

You will 'find nothing new or exciting in these random leaves; they contain things you know, things you have heard time and again; they are principles as old as the hills; indeed old to the point of being hackneyed; but principles' which, more often than not, we are wont to forget.

Seeing the way my life was going (and is going.), I thought it wise to din them into my ears, to emphasize and repeat them, so that they may not only grip my mind, but may also rouse my heart, and move my will to serious effort; in order that I may win increasingly, even if gradually, in a degree,

³ Psalm 101 (102). The Knox Version, n—12

⁴ Psalm 87 (88). The Knox Version, 16—19

however humble, a clean life, and a Peaceful Soul.

What is more, no man will dare to deny that the serious practice of these principles — truth, a diligent -sense of duty, deep devotion to public welfare, selfless kindness, integrity, industriousness, courage and daring, energetic, creative, progressive, salutary action, goodness, discipline, knowledge — no man will dare to deny that these principles are categorical imperatives for a healthy, sane and vigorous state.

You may boast about your military might, your place and power among nations, your overly modern development, your gross national product, your per capita income, the strength of your currency, your foreign reserves, your .national unity, your five-year plans. But if your citizens are thieves and liars, swindlers and rakes and libertines, work-shirking loafers, scallywags, bums and morons, cringing cowards, and heartless brutes; your statue of bronze has legs of clay; your edifice stands on shifting sand. And when the rains shall fall and the floods shall come, and the storms shall blow, and beat upon that house, it shall fall: and great shall be the fall thereof.

The Mystery of Human Weakness

[Editor's Note] We regret to inform our readers that this instalment of Random Leaves From My Diary by Dr. Bernard Fonlon, is the last to be printed in Cameroon Panorama, instead, it is hoped that the FULL serial will be published in booklet form, just as 'As I see it' which was published by the Catholic Information Service a few years ago. We shall keep our readers informed as to when this serial is likely to be published.

As I have said before, I would be a liar, a haughty hypocrite and mean, if I pretend that I have been totally-faithful to every principle set down in this diary. No; I have found it hard labour struggling to keep this code. In fact, as far as some of them are concerned, I have been a woeful, dismal failure, after years of striving. And God can bear witness to that. This is so to the extent that I am sometimes set wondering whether moral weariness, and exhaustion, and collapse, are not a phenomenon that sometimes befalls men strung up to try, and, who in fact, have tried for many a year. Is there in some men a morbid atavistic trait against which even grace is powerless? Is it well nigh impossible, for the majority "of men, .to resist the corroding, eroding, corrupting influence of *civilization*? Is the human being a complete slave of his inherited traits, or can he be liberated therefrom by good breeding and a thorough education? And that leads me to further pondering. Just as, in the

physical field, it is true to say that each given human being has just so much strength and no more; that there is a weight greater than which he cannot lift; just as in the intellectual sphere, it can be categorically asserted that a given individual has so much intelligence and no more, and that there are intellectual heights above which he cannot scale; just as it can be asserted as indisputably true that all men have not got the same tallness, and size, that all men are not equal in powers of brain and brawn: is it not valid, likewise, to assert the same of moral stamina? Is it not true that for a man, fighting against a certain weakness of character, there comes a stage beyond which he is totally helpless?

These are questions for theologians and moralists and psychologists to quarrel over. But, as far as I am concerned, and, from years *of* experience of men, I find the analogy worthy of examination and debate.

Thus, for my part, I have come to the conclusion that uprightness, at least for us, the common run of feeble men, consists, essentially, not in unbroken sinlessness, but rather in the firm and sincere refusal to yield, in the unswerving determination to rise up and fight, and fight again, even if we fall *seventy times seven times*. Salvation shall come, must come, if we are bent to wage this war to the last, we believe firmly and truly with the psalmist who made the following profession of faith:

God is our refuge and stronghold; sovereign aid he has brought us in the hour of peril. Not for us to be afraid, though earth should tumble about us, and the hills be carried away into the depths of the sea. See how its waters rage and roar, how the hills tremble before its might! The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge!

Nations may be in turmoil, and thrones totter, earth shrink away before his voice; but the Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge. Come near, and see God's acts, his marvellous acts done on earth; how he puts an end to wars all over the world, the bow shivered, the lances shattered, the shields burnt to ashes! Wait quietly, and you shall have proof that I am God, claiming empire among the nations, claiming empire over the world. The Lord of hosts is with us, the God of Jacob is our refuge.⁵

⁵ Psalm-45 (46): The Knox Version: 1—4, 7 — 12

6th Instalment

[Editor's Note] It is with great pleasure that Cameroon Panorama resumes the publication of RANDOM LEAVES FROM MY DIARY, by Dr. Bernard Fonlon. Five instalments of the FOREWORD of RANDOM LEAVES were published in 1974, in the January to June issues of this magazine. In this issue, we continue with the last section of the FOREWORD before launching on the RANDOM LEAVES proper.

Thus, ever painfully conscious of our weakness, on the one hand, and cultivating a firm faith in God's might and power to steel our wills, on the other, we can join, in deep feeling and devotion, with the Negro poet, Thomas Dorsey (whose humble hymn has won world wide renown, thanks to the mellow baritone of the late Jim Reeves) and pray and plead:

*Precious Lord, take my hand,
Lead me on, let me stand,
I am, tired, I am weak, I am worn.
Through, the storm, through the night.
Lead me on to the light,
Take my hand, precious Lord,
Lead me home
When my way grows drear.
Precious Lord, linger near
When my life is almost gone.
Hear my cry, bear my call,
Hold my hand, lest I fall;
Take my, hand, precious Lord
Lead me home,
When the darkness appears
And the night draws near,
And the day is past and gone,
At the river I stand,
Take my hand, precious Lord,
Guide my feet, hold my hand,*

*Lead me home.*⁶

Yes, the heights to scale, set out in these *Random Leaves from my Diary*, are lofty and slippery, and craggy and flinty, and dizzy and staggering. And we who would attempt to climb up feeble, and frail, and prone to despondency and despair. It is, therefore, wisdom to know how demanding is the toil that lies before us. It is wisdom to know and admit our limitations. It is wisdom to avoid occasions of sin. It is wisdom to know where sure, invincible strength is to be found; wisdom to know that by one sure step and then another, the longest road is ended. And thus, when we look round us and see

*nought for our comfort,
nought for our desire,
save that the sky grows-darker yet'
and the sea rises higher,*⁷

we will not wince, we will not waver; we will brace-ourselves to battle to the last. We will-surrender ourselves to Him, who swore; that, through his might, we can move mountains; we will plead and pray with dauntless hope and unfaltering faith, as did young John Henry... (later Cardinal) Newman, when his mind was enmeshed in anguish and doubt:

*Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom
Lead Thou- me on;
The night is dark, and I am far from home;
Lead Thou me on'
Keep Thou my feet; I do not, ask to see,
The distant scene — one step enough for me*

*I was not ever thus, nor prayed that Thou
Shouldst lead me on
I loved to choose and see my path, but now
Lead Thou me on;
I loved the garish day, and, Spite of fears,*

⁶ *The Book of Negro Folklore*:- Edited by James Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps; Dodd, Mead and Co., N.Y. 1958, p. 320-321

⁷ G.K.Chesterton: *The Ballad of The White Horse*

Pride ruled my will; remember: not, past years...

*So long Thy power has blessed me, sure it still
Will lead me on,
O'er moor, and fen, o'er crag and torrent till
The night is gone,
And with morn, those angels faces smile
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.*

*Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on;
The night is dark, and I am far from home;
Lead Thou me on;
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see .
The distant, scene — one step enough for me.⁸
Yaounde, Wednesday, September 12, 1973.*

People who are self aware, self critical, are not given to the ponderous habit of passing blame to others for what is their own responsibility. They know their own capabilities and short comings. (*Allport*)

Faith and Life

Maku, Sunday 3rd January, 1954

This morning, it struck me that, I should regard my life as one complete, undivided whole; for chequered though it be, it has a purpose and a plan.

I saw that, in life, triumph has its part, failure has its part; and that I must accept them both, joy has its part, and sorrow, its part; and I must accept them both. Honour has its part, and humiliation, its part; and I must accept them both.

Thinking further, I recalled the truth that it was without my will and consent that I came into being; — I did not choose my place; I did not choose my time; I did not choose my duration: — these depended totally on the will of Another. And if that Other is, thus, Master of .my beginning, my

⁸ *News Chronicle Song Book*: Compiled by T.A. Ratcliff; p. 179

being, my continued existence, and my .end, then He is Master of my total life. Indeed, He Is Master of it, down to the minutest detail, down to the minutest moment.

For, often, I have found myself in situations which exercised a profound influence on the subsequent course of my life; and when I looked back, I saw that I was brought into these momentous situations, in each case, by a series of seemingly insignificant events which, taken in isolation, looked to more than chance ‘happenings; but which, taken as a whole, evinced a well ordered plan, by reason of the necessary and far-reaching role that each played in the production of the ultimate effect.

This observation has clenched in my mind the truth that each man’s life has a well-set plan with, a Master Architect and Builder in control and at work. Sometime ago, I was reading the life of Abraham Lincoln, and I saw this truth clearly demonstrated in it. God meant him to steer the American nation safe through the furious hurricane of the Civil War, to prepare him for this, He got Lincoln schooled and drilled in the domestic hell that was-his home: without the harrowing, hardening misery of that home, he might not have been able to bear, as he did, the overwhelming strain of the nerve-racking war.

Thus, indeed, the failures, the humiliations, the disappointments .and the sorrows, that try my soul, have a shaping to give my life that no successes, achievements or joys can give, even though, they be multiplied manifold and piled up mountain-high. These, hard things are part of a .benevolent plan, and are meant to serve a salutary end. Thus, the only logical thing for me to do is to submit myself, heart and soul, to the great Designer who orders the whole.

He is a fool who tries to run his life-independently of God. For, if, indeed, there are so many, things in our life that we cannot foresee, that we cannot understand, that we cannot escape; if there is a Higher Power with whom it rests to foster or to foil, to make or to mar, the puny plans we conceive, what better, what higher attitude can there be, on the part of man, than Submissive Faith?

It is the only one that is logical; the only one that is right; the only one that brings happiness, and peace of soul even in times of storm and stress.

Faith will banish fear and worry; it will give you strength and hope. Faith will assure you that you are not bearing life’s burden unaided, that you are fighting life’s battle alone. Faith will tell you that there is a Benevolent Hand that charts and steers the course of your life, however zigzag that course may

seem. Faith will you tell you that the future phase of pain is joy, however racking the moment's misery.

Faith assures us that, if we but give God a chance, all must be well in the end.

Is this philosophy mere passivism? Have we just to sit down and wait, because our lives are in the hands of an almighty Designer? No; for, for one thing, the Designer is unseen, and, as a general rule, speaks to no man openly; for another, the future is hid.

But, above all it is part and parcel, of this plan that each man shall cooperate; shall play his part in the development of his own life. Nothing is more evident than this.

God gave us life; but only as a spark that must be fanned into the blaze; a bud within the seed which must be sown and reared into the tree. In other words, we are born with, potencies, dormant talents, which have yet to be actualized. And since this cannot be done without the exercise of the said potencies, without the assiduous and vigorous development of these faculties, this view of life is not mere passivism.

The Passive must be counterbalanced by an energetic Active. No: Life is a warfare, a very military service without respite; life is labour, and, hand in hand with deep faith in God, must go hard, unremitting, relentless, ceaseless toil. God does not come down to tell, us what He wants us to be: it is normally by trying, here and there, that we finally hit at the way He means us to take.

Sometimes, when I take up something to do, and meet with difficulties, I am inclined to think that these obstacles are sign of God's disapproval. Reason shows me that to think thus is to err; for, if it is by exercising itself that a faculty grows, it stands to reason that there will be greater growth, where there is a greater struggle; and where else do you have a greater struggle than where high hurdles bar the way! Therefore, that God should throw obstructions in our way is rather¹ in the nature of things, and more a sign of His favour than of His disfavour, of His approval than of His disapproval.

History, by the lives of *men* like Moses, King David, Jeremias the prophet, Cardinal Vaughan, Abraham Lincoln, Cardinal Newman, Mahatma Ghandi and yea, by the very life of our Lord himself, bears me out. It is God's mysterious way to pile the, road He means us to follow, for miles, thick with hurdles; so that, coming to the end of our endurance, and becoming utterly helpless; but succeeding, notwithstanding, it may be borne

in deep upon us, that it was with strength other than ours that we reached the goal.

Therefore, where my cause is just and right, where no authority intervenes to ban, I will forge ahead even if the chances of success look very slender.

If I have learned a lesson in my life, it is that you cannot say categorically, by looking at the present state of things, that God intends such and such a thing, or that He is leading up to this or that. We calculate by the laws of Logic; but God works by laws that are larger than Logic. Pie can take one road and arrive at different places. I once believed it almost as gospel, indeed I believed it for most of my thinking life up till last October, that God meant me to be a priest. And many there were who believed the same. When I was going through last year's crisis, I said, "If I get through this, I will take it as God's will that I should become a priest." I got through it, and very mysteriously too! But, today, where am I? Where am I today?

What then can I say with- certainty with regard to the future? Absolutely nothing.

The best allowed to man is to surmise, to guess. The best I can do is to strive to incarnate the good desires that have eaten deep into my heart, and strive in the hope that God who gave the talents, and gave the chances, and allowed those yearnings to grip my soul, also wills to see them won.

Yes, the life of man is planned, but man is, not the planner. I shall plan where I may; I will plan where I must; but I will only plan in the hope that, that what I should plan, was contained, in 'the' Greater Plan. I will work until I am fit to snap in two; but I will" work without worry. I will plough in the hope to reap; but, if a blight; destroys the harvest before its time, I will-accept what-befalls, in the firm conviction that God to whom I belong, being Life and all, knows His business best,

O my God. I believe in thee;

O my God I submit to thee;

O my God I will toil with thee;

Give me faith; Give me light;

Give me humility; Give me strength;

Make me wise, and create a clean heart within my breast.

Create a clean heart within my breast; and bless my struggle, and show, by my life, that the highest success can co-exist with lowliness and deep religious faith; that no man ever put his trust in thee, and put it in vain.

I have been told the story of the two brothers, one a priest and the other a doctor, who look very much alike.

A short-sighted, kindly old woman met the doctor one day and said to him.

“You preached a-grand sermon on Sunday Father.”

“Oh, ma’am,” replied the doctor, “I’m not the brother who preaches — I’m the one who practises.”

The Law of Truth

Enugu, 8th December 1952

To be truthful, in the fullest sense of the term, demands more than men would normally realize: it exacts that what I say about a thing should correspond to what I think about it; and that what I think about it should correspond to what that thing is in itself. In a word, there should be conformity between Expression and Thought, Thought and Things.

The law of truth demands, therefore, that I must diligently seek the facts about those things of which I have to speak, and that, where I am bound to speak the truth that I know, or to air the opinion I hold, I should do so frankly, and be fully prepared to take the consequences, however severe, that such candour might bring upon my head. The price of Truth is pain.

The law of truth forbids me to give out as certainly true statements that do not rest on proved or concrete facts or solid principles; forbids me to force my opinion on others, in things where other opinions are tenable; and cautions, me to be slow, very slow, indeed, in saying what I think about things when nothing calls for such expression of opinion.

The observation of this law would be rendered very difficult, if not impossible, if it is not followed by another; an obvious one: The Law of Fearlessness.

Supplement to the Law of Truth

Enugu, 14th November 1953

As I said in the first passage, Truth means the conformity of expression and thought, thought and extra-mental reality; and the word expression applies no less to actions than to words.

Further investigation has led me to see that truth has a double aspect; an active and a passive, that is: it is absolutely imperative not only that; I should speak the truth, but also that I should *see and listen to it*.

Whether it is speaking the truth, or whether it is listening to it, the prize, as I have said before, will often be pain. For frankness will often bring a whole hornet's nest about my ears; and I will sometimes have to hear facts about myself that will sting like maddened wasps. Sometimes, for the sake of truth, I will brook "the frown of the great," and bide "the tyrant's stroke." Often too, I will have to stand helpless by and see injustice, oppression and all manner of wrong prevail; and myself powerless to check them. As a votary of truths I must speak when I must; I must sit down and listen and open my eyes and see the facts, however painful these may be, to ear and eye.

I have seen that foremost among the things that cause men to betray the truth is fear: — fear of the tortures they might have to undergo, fear of the losses they, might have to bear, if they, unswervingly stand for what they know to be right. Thus it is borne upon me that I must be ever ready to accept the worst (in the shape of suffering) that can be inflicted upon me for standing for the truth. My heart should be so removed from earthly things and treasures and joys that I should be prepared, at any moment, to lose everything, to embrace even exile, "chill penury," or "the most painful" of privations, yes even death itself, and that with joy, if truth demands that I should.

To prepare myself for accepting the worst, when the call comes, demands that I should drill myself to a hard and drastic life. This entails: the exact fulfilment of the law; the diligent execution of duty; the willing acceptance of the hard things that life brings to me, in whatever shape they may come; the free and willing undertaking of privations and mortifications.

Without this fourfold discipline, adherence to truth is rendered extremely difficult, if not impossible.

I perceive in me two tendencies which militate against truth: the first is the inclination or the desire to please, the desire to water-down the truth in order not to, of fend; the second is the tendency to justify myself, even when

I know that what is said against me is true.

I am no advocate of slashing bluntness: tact must be used; no offence should be given if it can be helped. Yet, if the truth must be told, it must be told.

To remedy the vicious tendency, of self justification, I forbid myself, from hence, ever to attempt to justify myself, except I am *absolutely* certain that I am right. But even when I am right, I must refrain from justifying myself if there is no serious reason for doing so. Furthermore, I must become my own severest critic, admitting frankly to myself the evils and the faults that I find in myself. Withal, I must not-only welcome criticism, but must go further and ask for it; and ask for it in earnest.

It is absolutely necessary that I should drill myself to the point where I can sit down calmly and listen, without wincing, without bitterness, to the worst things that can be said about me.

Stanton, Lincoln's Secretary of War, once called the President "a damned fool" for signing a certain order. When Lincoln heard it, what did he do? Flare up in rage as most of us would have done? Not the large-hearted Lincoln! He merely observed, with great composure, "If Stanton says that I am a damned fool, *then I must be*, for he is – nearly always – right!"

What a man to imitate! I am resolved to follow his noble lead.

The seeker after truth should give no quarter whatsoever to his feelings; for feelings stir up bitterness and hate; they disturb the working of the mind, warp judgment, give birth to prejudice, and prevent us from seeing things as they are in themselves.

There is no need to be afraid of hearing myself condemned; if I am right, I become better by bearing the treatment patiently; if I am wrong, that will be a big opportunity for humiliating myself, by admitting my guilt, to them that condemn me. Above all, in case of such guilt, I can always go down on my knees before God and make my peace with Him. In the long run, it is what He thinks of me, and not what men think of me, that really matters.

It is gripping my mind more and more, that men are rather to be pitied than blamed. If a man gets mad against me for saying what is true, or for doing what is right; it means, not that he hates the truth, but either that he is quick to anger, or that jealousy has got the better of him, or that the very sight of me is a thorn in his side.

Anger, jealousy and hatred are maddening passions; they flare up before you have the chance to bring them under; and, often, the battle is fierce and long. When I see what a tough and tedious task I have had of it to put them

down in me; when I see the meagre results that have rewarded the long-drawn struggle, it is brought home forcefully to me how tolerant I should be, when I find these passions in others even when I am the riddled target of their fury.

Today, I take away all boundaries from the territory of tolerance.

The Law of Fearlessness

Enugu, 8th December 1952

Fear is a painful feeling which makes us shrink back from impending danger. Cruet among the things that put men in fright are persons, of rank, or authority, knowledge of a painful or unpleasant truth, notable physical injury, criticism, failure, unpopularity, ridicule, censure – in short, anything that brings with it suffering to the body or to the soul.

Fear, considered in itself, is not something bad; in fact, it can sometimes serve useful purposes. If the fear of criticism makes me do what I am doing so well that only those who won't be pleased shall find fault with it; if threatening failure excites me to put out every effort in order to make sure that I shall not fail, then such fear is salutary.

But, if the thought that I shall run the gauntlet of bitter criticism or of unpopularity; if the thought that I shall suffer for what I do, unnerves me and makes me leave off the unquestionable good that I am about to do, then such fear is mean and should be put down with a strong hand.

The Law of fearlessness, therefore, forbids me to tremble before any man or group of men; it forbids me to shrink back from doing what searching examination, has shown me to be true, good, worthy, and noble. It commands me to do that good; to do it fully prepared to embrace harrowing criticism, bitter unpopularity, crushing punishment, sharpest censure, dismal failure.

Yet, this is a law enjoining enlightened firmness, not blind obstinacy; so, if I discover that the cause that I have stood for is wrong, I must immediately withdraw from it, no matter the humiliation that such withdrawal may bring upon my head. According to the foregoing law, such things as criticism and unpopularity must be faced up to; and since these, more often than not, give rise, in those who have to bear them, to bitterness and resentment, the law of fearlessness, in order to forestall this danger, demands another rule: The Law

of Non-Violence.

Enugu, Sunday 8th February

Meditation on the Law of Fearlessness led me to analyse my soul and to examine my past, and this is the discovery I made.

I found that the most predominant unconscious force that has dwarfed my development in certain things (athletics for instance), and threatens to dwarf it in others, is fear. The mere thought that I might fail, or that I shall be laughed at, or that I shall be found fault with, or that I shall become unpopular, makes me recoil from what I am about to do. But why all this? The root cause of it is that my whole nature shrinks back in horror from whatever brings humiliation. Ever the thought at the back of my mind is, you will be mocked; you will be humiliated; you will fail and suffer shame in the eyes of men: it is the disgrace it brings that makes failure so painful.

I have lived, all these years, a yearner for praise, success and admiration, but, now, I see that the man who does not feel, now and; then, the heartache of failure, or the sting of being despised, can never achieve anything worthwhile, can never come to the true knowledge of himself.

Now I see that these humiliations, and even viciously unfair treatment at the hands of others, are invaluable to the growth of the soul of a man, who will accept misfortune in good faith; who will keep clean of grudges; who, in the unswerving pursuit of his goal and the unflinching search for truth, is prepared to receive the hard blows and kicks of life, in the conviction, that in grief we grow strong.

I see in the life of a man who, in despite of supreme efforts to succeed, has been baffled by one tragic failure after another, a sublimity, great and austere, which is lacking in the gaudy laurels of those who seem to be ever blest. Better to brave the former's road, and be humbled, and schooled and sobered, than to get drunk on cheap success and lose one's head. I see in him' who, rather than betray one truth, faces the slashing blows of ridicule, criticism, misunderstanding, censure or unpopularity, a bravery that I miss in the stoutest warrior.

From this on, I pray, let the sound of praise and admiration be a wasp in my ear; and the desire for them raise gall in my mouth. In life, I am resolved to do my best, but knowing that humiliation must come, I will not shrink back from it: I will yearn for it, in whatever form it may come, and strive always to keep my soul on the alert for its coming.

From hence, those who curse me, those who mock me, those who make me hang my head in shame, those who slash me with pen and tongue, those who see no good in what I do, shall be counted my best benefactors: they are offering me invaluable chances for the growth of my soul.

The fear that these things held for me must be gone, now and forever. From today, whenever I have to make a decision, noble, but fraught with danger, I will

- a) assess the worst that it will bring upon my head,
- b) accept the worst, sincerely and seriously,
- c) take the step.

From past experience, I know that this will entail much suffering, especially in a psychological way; it will put my soul on the rack: even as I write this my mind shrinks back from some of the pangs I envisage. Yet, I can't help it; there is no other choice; for the one way of defeating fear is to do the thing you fear to do, provided, of course, that your cause is good and true and noble.

The Law of Non-Violence

Enugu, 8th December 1952.

The surface meaning of Non-Violence that I must refrain from employing unjust and hurtful force against my neighbour, must refrain from inflicting injury by word or action:

However, the true meaning goes infinitely deeper. For injurious acts, by a psychological law, are the result of injurious thoughts and feelings; these thoughts and feelings are, in their turn, intensified by the actions to which they give birth; and, becoming thus charged, they supply more force to action: and the agent gets worse and worse. The whole process is a cycle; as you think, so you feel; as you feel, so you act; as you act, so you think; and so goes the round. Hence the supreme importance of keeping a check on resentful thoughts and feelings.

The Law of Non-Violence, lays down that for no reason whatsoever should I harbour an uncharitable thought against anybody; lays down that I must give no quarter to the slightest feeling of bitterness against those who

do me wrong; that I must look at their behaviour from their own point of view and give them, as far as possible, the same credit for honesty of purpose that I would claim for myself.

Non-Violence is. forbearance; it is patience; it is tolerance: it means that I must keep the violent in me ever in leash; no, that I must put it to death; that I must bear pain without repining; that I must allow others the freedom of their, opinions and tastes and choice of behaviour; yes, that I must so adjust myself with those among whom I live, that a difference or clash of opinion should never mean a severing of good relations.

The foregoing law, being negative in nature, does not suffice to give full nobility to the soul. I liken it to the clearing of ground and the grubbing up of stumps to make room for seed and needful crops. It is thus the preamble for a positive and more important law: The Law of Selfless Love.

The Law of Selfless Love

Among the burning desires of the human heart are the craving for appreciation, the craving for thanks, the craving for love. And, when he that strains for these meets frustration, the yearning turns into bitterness. No tooth, is so keen as that of ingratitude; and only the man that has loved and loved in vain can know how sharp are the pangs of unrequited love. They can gall a man's whole life, and turn him completely against humanity.

Yet, there is no help for it; the hearts of men must for ever fester; for, unfortunately, appreciation, love and thankfulness shall for ever be rare on the face of the-earth.

When I muse-upon these things, I am reminded of the rose of the field, how scarce they are, and with what difficulty they are reared. But look at the weeds and the rank useless grass — how abundant, how readily they spring! So too shall lack of appreciation, ingratitude and unkindness, yea, and heartless cruelty, abound among men. But the rose, and so too the noble traits of human character, must be raised only by dint of diligent toil and careful cultivation. Realizing this, I have made up my mind to cease, from hence, to be bitter against the indifferent, the unkind, the ingrate, the hostile.

Rather, I am learning to look with pity on man, who is so unfortunate to inherit such a monstrous make-up. For human nature is like a stream that is ever tending downwards, rushing headlong towards the sea of wickedness; and he that wants to do good must be for ever toiling upstream against the powerful current. So, when a man not thankful to me for kindness done to him, I view the failure with a sense of humour and say, not that he could, if

he would, but wouldn't: but rather that he would, if he could, but couldn't! The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. What wonder then that in the strife to be good, so many get worn-out and give up the struggle!

Christ healed ten lepers; only one returned to give thanks. He, being God, became man and lived, and suffered, and died for us; how many of us appreciate this love? He has been the butt of the greatest amount of ingratitude, and the target, through the ages, of the bitterest hate.

And who am I to expect better?

The Law of selfless Love commands two things: first, that I must love; second, that I must love disinterestedly — with no desire whatsoever to be loved in return.

Therefore, I make it a point of duty never to fail in the rendering of thanks and appreciation, due for kindness received; and I must spare no pains to inculcate this duty in those put under my charge. I make it a point to pour out my heart in love and service for men; but, in doing this, never to cherish the slightest wish to be loved or served in return.

This means that I must gratefully embrace the indifference, the thanklessness, yes, and even the positive hostility of those whom I have laboured to serve. It means that I must never complain, when I am the victim of such usage.

Often, in the past, on noticing defects in those for whom I cherished some affection, I would shrink back from them and congratulate myself on my fine moral sense. Now, I see all that as wrong: I must love everybody without distinction, the friendly for his friendliness; the hostile in spite of his hostility; the good for his goodness; the erring in despite of his errors. It is only thus that I can hope to win the hostile, to convert the erring, to keep the friend and confirm the good.

The Law of Silence

Enugu, 8th December 1952

A loose tongue is far more dangerous than wildfire: there is no end to the evil it can do; and nothing so betokens a vacant mind as extravagant, loud and dogmatic speaking. A wise man, conscious of his limitations, and conscious of how hard truth is to come by, knows that he can speak with absolute certainty about few things; and, thus, when he speaks, he speaks sparingly and with caution. There was a rhyme we rattled off as little kids, but, today, its meaning and wisdom dawn on me with forceful conviction:

*“My tongue within my lips I wilt rein,
For he who talks much, must talk in vain.”*

Yet silence of the lips alone is a sham and a waste of time: it is a waste of time to put a curb on the tongue while allowing wanton thoughts to run riot in the mind. True silence means that I must not employ my mind to think that which I should not employ my tongue to utter; evil or useless things should be forbidden to both mind and tongue. True silence is silence with a purpose: it aims not at creating a blank in the brain, but at making ample room for good and useful thoughts,

This law as I see it lays down two things:-

I. All excessive and needless talking must stop: I must be silent and reserved. Set days of Silence must be religiously observed.

II. When the mouth is shut, the mind shall be busy with mental prayer or else shall employ itself brooding over a theme, a poem, an article or other problem.

I know that thinking, orderly thinking, is a hard thing. The mind is ever inclined to shake off control and wander at will. To remedy this defect, this is what shall be done: a topic shall be chosen for a set duration (a day, for instance, or a week) and during that period all other themes shall be rigidly excluded; the wandering mind shall be brought back to it as often as it strays, and shall not be allowed to depart, until the theme itself is changed.

Onitsba, 18th December 1954

True silence consists in purging from our minds all uncharitable and sinful thoughts, and in measuring carefully the good word we allow to the lips.

The Law of Simplicity

I sprang from humble origins: I was not favoured by wealth; I was not favoured by rank. I was lowly born; and it is my deep desire lowly to live and lowly to die: in a word, it is my ambition to live the life of a simple man. *But, what is simplicity?*

At present, I cannot fully say what it is in itself. I can only describe it by saying what it excludes and what it entails. In so far as it expresses the relation that should exist between the state of our mind and the outward expression, of it, in our dealings with others, it means the exclusion...of all duplicity, affection, airs of superiority, and the like; it means sincerity, humility, ...truth.

Applied to the acquisition and the use of material things, it means ruling out from our lives those complications and excesses in raiment, food, furniture, which are the outcome of greed and the craving for luxury and extravagance.

But to me, the essence of this virtue seems to consist of that transparent meekness and humility that should mark my dealings with my fellow human beings.

For, it is my faith that high birth, shade of skin, rank and wealth, lofty learning and such-like things put no man one inkle higher than the rest of man: it is only high moral worth, a solid noble character, that confers superiority: it gives a man essential greatness; for, the nobler a man is in character, the more a man he is. Yet, what man can tell what his worth is in moral terms? What man can, without fear of self-deception, lay claim to unquestioned moral excellence? And, if he does possess a measure of such excellence, how long will he retain it? Moral worth is hard to determine and is held with difficulty and uncertainty. And the man who would deem himself higher than the rest of men, falls, ipso facto, lower than the lowest of men.

As I see it, the only thing which puts one man unquestionably above others, in the social order, is authority. He that has authority shares in God's ruling power and, therefore, shares the prestige that must go with such power. Such a one, then, has a right to the obedience and the respect of his lawful inferiors. This is the view that the said inferiors must take of him.

But the man himself that wields power should look at himself from a totally different point of view.

He should regard himself (as he is in very truth), not as the master, but as the servant of all. Were I such a one, I would strive to make myself one with the lowly and the humble, so as not to frighten or awe them off; and, thus, make, it difficult for them to obtain from me, that service which is their due.

Therefore, I resolve that no feeling, of fear or awe, on the part of others, shall ever come within my environment. With me, any assumption of airs of superiority shall be anathema; with me, there shall be, absolutely, no consciousness, whatsoever, of personal dignity or prestige; with me the poorest and the lowliest shall ever be at their ease. And above all, everywhere, and on every occasion, the youth, in general, and little children in particular, shall be my dearest friends.

I cannot accomplish this aim without taking upon myself, in Christ-like fashion, the poor man's life. Therefore I resolve, from now on, to be always satisfied with the plainest fare, with the simplest clothing and furniture; I must never claim any special treatment or any exemptions, and the putting, on of airs should be completely out of the question. In short, whatever I may become, my life, my surroundings, my bearing, shall be such that any man shall find it easy to approach me; and, approaching, find himself as in his accustomed environment, completely at his ease.

I believe that if I persevere in purifying myself with prayer, penance and union with God, I shall be able to go further down among those who are regarded as having sunk into the cesspool of sin, and lift them out of the mire; and, this, with no feelings of superiority, being, as I am, in very truth, a sinful man.

I believe, firmly and truly, that it is not associating with the poor and the humble, or with children and youth, that lowers a man's dignity. I have no patience, whatever, with the view that, to maintain his prestige, a man in authority should assume towards inferiors an upstairs attitude or a cold forbidding bearing. True dignity is moral dignity; and this is lost, not by showing respect to the poor, who in God's eyes may be far higher in and myself; it is lost my meanness of soul, that is, by unbecoming thoughts, word and deeds.

Friendship

A kindly turn of speech multiplies a man's friends, and a courteous way of speaking invites many a friendly reply. Let your acquaintances be many, but your advisers one in a thousand. If you want to make a friend, take him on trial, and be in no hurry to trust him; for one kind of friend is only so when it suits him but will not stand by you in your day of trouble. Another kind of friend will fall out with you and to your dismay make your quarrel public, and a third kind of friend will share your table, but not stand by you in your day of trouble: when you are doing well he will be your second self, ordering your servants about; but if ever you are brought low he will turn against you and will hide himself from you. Whoever fears the Lord makes true friends, for as man is, so is his friend. (Ecclesiasticus 6:5-17)

Detachment and Discipline

Enugu, 8th December 1952

Right order demands that, in man, Reason, should be Master and should control all his actions. On the contrary, however, the craving for sense pleasure and self-satisfaction is so strong that, more often than not, the passions overwhelm reason, seize the mastery, and the man is completely unmanned, and reduced to a beast.

Indeed, a person can become so helpless at the hands of his lusts, that he will haunt places, cling to persons, and yearn for things knowing full-well that these, sooner or later, must work his ruin: he is the sorry victim of a wicked tyranny. I am no stranger to this experience.

Today, more than ever before, it is borne in upon me that, if there shall be order in my life, if my mission shall not be marred, if I am to be healed of the emotional anguish of which I am so often the prey, if I shall have true peace of mind and heart, I must lay the axe at the root of the tree: my lusts must be chained, my palate tamed, and my cravings effectively leashed.

No more vacillation, no compromise with danger, no sparing of self — I take, once and forever, the steep and flinty path; the only path that leads to success, the path of ruthless detachment and drastic discipline.

Enugu, 15th February, 1953

The thought is gradually gripping my mind that moral development, that is, the effective control and eradication of the base in man, and the assiduous cultivation of the noble, must keep pace with intellectual growth or else the man must come to wreck; for without the drastic discipline of good morality, scholarship is bound to go to a man's, head.

My central aim in life is to become an educator and inspirer of youth. To succeed in this, I must strain for the fullest possible measure, of this twofold culture of head and heart; 'for the young worship high scholarship and cannot resist the pull of a noble character.

The Law of Submission

Right, order, as I have said, demands that sense, should be subject to reason; more so, It Remands that Reason should be subject to God, When a roan makes, a thing, he expects that thing to act as he made, if to act and to serve the purpose for which it was made: he expects that thing to be, wholly under his control. No other situation or relation would be correct.

God is our Creator; we are his creatures; and human life must end in total frustration except it is in every way submissive to His will.

Thou hast made us for thyself ...O Lord, and restless are our hearts until they rest in Thee.

Thus said St. Augustine of Hippo. And he knew what he was talking about; for, in youth, he was reckless and wanton, and the despair of his mother.

When I was writing the law of simplicity, I racked my head trying to find out what should be the principle of unity in human life. Then, I could not find it; now, I think I have Simplicity is the absence of composition; the absence of complexity; it is unity. Now, the chief thing which gives meaning to human activity is the driving, motive behind such activity. Therefore, if our motive is simple, the activity will be simple. But, where shall this motive take its rise: in other words, what should be the ennobling principle of human conduct?

The answer is clear: — if our motive is to be at once simple, one, noble, clean and true, it must derive its being from God; for God is simplicity; God is unity; God is goodness; God is nobility; God is Holiness; God is Truth.

According to this teaching, therefore, the over-riding motive of ail my life shall be: To do tall things for God, and to do them as God would have them done. This is true submission. No more seeking for personal advantage; no more craving for personal advancement; no more battles to right personal wrongs: I shall seek, I shall crave, I shall fight but for His will. If He wishes me to rise thanks to Him; if He wishes me to lie buried all my life, thanks to Him as well: I wait but to do His bidding, and that is enough for me.

Lord, I do not crave to grow one inch taller than the height you have appointed; I do not crave to rise one degree higher than the limit you have set; nor to live one minute longer than the span you have assigned. My life's desire is to fulfil what thou hast decreed for my life, and to fulfil it to the full: give me the peace of: soul, true contentment – that is all I ask.

Submission, to God's will demands, therefore, not only that I should keep his law, but that I should accept, whole-heartedly, the plan that He has 'laid' down for my life, and submit myself totally to those he has appointed to be superiors on this earth.

Along the path that God has laid down for me, there have been, there are, there will be, to the close, things sweet and things bitter; times of joy and times of sorrow; harrowing failure and sweet success. Yet, the joyful things and the bitter, all are meant for my good, and appointed by His will. Indeed, I have had many a heartache in my days that have been; and, often, when I look back and see the good that came as their aftermath, I am grateful for the pangs; and, with hind-sight, I am convinced I would not exchange them for sweeter experiences: they were the things that made me strong, and helped my soul to grow; for, it is in grief, as one writer has said, that we grow Strong

Therefore, I accept, I must accept, all the bitter things that await me, big and small. As each comes in its turn, I will embrace it and set myself to seek, diligently, what benefit or lesson God' means me-to derive or learn there from. And if God, as he shall, employs other men to inflict such suffering on me, I must look on these as the instruments of His Providence, and must not tolerate against such persons even the slightest feeling of resentment.

Of those whom he has appointed to be my superiors, throughout my life, some will suit me, some will not. But whether, they suit or not, they are his. representatives, notwithstanding, and must be given, as such, both inward and outward obedience and deference, whatever be the point on which they demand that submission, whatever be the manner in which they demand it, submission to them must be, forever: the high law of my life. First I must obey, thereafter I can make representations, if there be any need to make

them. No representations however well founded, shall come before .obedience.

If the policy or system under which work is faulty, I must not repine in heart, or indulge, bitter criticisms against it. Rather, while dissociating myself from whatever is evil in the said system or policy, I must work and endeavour, in hope and in peace of heart, to bring about a better state of things.

I have vowed that mine must be a life of constant striving to incarnate my ideas; a life of bold adventure — except God wills otherwise.

Since I shall never be able to get a comprehensive grasp of any question my mental talents being limited — I will always stand in need of others advice. Since everything I do, no matter how much labour and. skill I put in the doing, must be defective, there will have to be *criticism*. Since I .must err, now and again, weak man that I am, I will need correction, and sometimes will receive *rebukes*. And, since it cannot be that men will always see, eye to eye, with what I do, I must be prepared for *attacks*.

These things are part and parcel of life's plan; of man's lot, and must be viewed as such; and it would be wrong to repine against them.

But criticisms, corrections, rebukes, attacks, how they try the soul of man! Like keen, swift arrows that speed from a strong, stout bow, they rudely pierce the tortured ear and fester in the heart!

I am coining round to the idea that the, ear is, in a sense, the most sensitive of all the senses. What sting is sharper than that of a piercing rebuke? It will rankle long after the word was spoken. Nor does the ear smart only when imputation is untrue or undue. When I look back at my follies and blunders, I own myself a fool. But will I brook-it, if another person saw the same blunders and follies and called me the fool that I so readily own myself to be? Certainly not!

From hence, therefore, I resolve that all corrections, rebukes, attacks, criticisms, kind and bitter, constructive and destructive, just and unjust, shall, henceforth, and for ever, be always received by me with, gentle, thanks. Yes, I must even ask for criticism when no one is prepared to give them on his own initiative; if you are surrounded only by those who sing your praises, the chances are, ten to one that, there is something seriously wrong; that you are the victim of fulsome sycophancy.

Whenever, rebukes, criticisms or attacks are being administered to me, I must do but one thing — listen; and listen with attentive attitude and cheerful heart. Never must I defend myself except harm would befall others,

or the cause for which I fight, if I don't, I must set myself, diligently, to sift the imputation, in order to extract from it: whatever truth or lesson it might contain. Further, I must not only banish all resentments from, my heart and mind, but must render thanks for the good that I have gained from the correction, rebuke, attack or criticism. The golden rule must ever be: Bite your lips and say nothing!

Such is the passive; side, of the law of submission —the side which tells me what I must not do when: criticised; how I must act when others are over me. There is, withal, an active side — the side which tells me what I must do, when it is my duty to-rebuke; how I must act when others are under me.

Now that I know how the things that I have discussed above try the soul of man; and, although I am resolved to submit to them from the hands, of others, I am vowed that I shall have no one to submit to them from mine; except it can't be helped.

I make up my mind, therefore, never to attack anybody, bound to oppose a man, I must on no account attack his person, but must confine myself to showing the falsehood or the evil in what he has said or done; and this I must do with kindness, gentleness and courtesy.

If knowingly or unknowingly I offend any one, be it a little youngster, I am bound to render him an apology, readily and humbly. I must criticise nobody behind his back. If I see that a friend needs advice from me, I must give it to him personally; and if I feel that, for one reason or another, I can't criticise him in his presence, I must not even think of his faults, not to talk of making them the subject of conversation behind his back.

Should anybody ask me to criticise him, I must not do so except I have sure and objective knowledge of the principles on which to base that criticism: if it be a moral question, I must be certain about the moral principles involved; if it be a scientific or an artistic work that I am asked to criticise, I must know something about the principles of the said science or art; else I must express no opinion. Further I must never venture on any such criticism, or correction, or advice, unless it is asked for, or unless I can truthfully say that duty or charity demands it from me.

Then, if I must speak, I must say what I believe to be the truth about the thing of which I have to speak. Nothing that savours of mean flattery; nothing exaggerated; nothing said to please; no truth that must be voiced, should be kept back lest it sting — what I say, whether of praise or blame, must be based on solid facts or well-founded principles, must be such as to appeal and convince on its own merits; else I must keep quiet.

Yet, in such candour, tact is of the utmost importance, Bluntness that slashes rudely must fail to convince and win. So I must make it a point to study and employ the same principles taught by Dr. Dale Carnegie in his book: *How to win Friends and Influence People*; principles in which truth and sincerity, tact and charity blend harmoniously.

I must never report anybody, especially where I have made no attempt to convert, him from the evil for which the report to be made; and, in case, I must be in duty bound to report, and must inform him, before-hand, what I intend to do. Else the rule must be: mind your own business; be and let be; live and let live.

Whenever I am in charge of fellows, I must make rebukes and corrections very rare occurrences, and, whenever they are given, they must be sweetened with gentle kindness. Frequent and angry recriminations vented from festering feelings do no good. Good example, cheerfulness, love and kindness — these would work wonders in rooting out vice and planting virtue. They are the corrective methods I must put to frequent use.

For the rest, I must see and see not; hear and not understand!

I must never command anybody to do a thing which I am not prepared to do myself; and where the thing is really difficult, I must lead my command with the actual doing of what I command.

“If one will not bend one’s back to the work,” says Mahatma Gandhi, “it is no good issuing orders. All would assume leadership and dictate to others, and there would be nothing done in the end. But where the leader himself becomes a servant, there are no rival claimants for leadership.”

The Law of Work

Enugu, 8th December 1952

Of all the powerful things that bar the way to success, there is none that can close the road, so completely, as the love of ease, or rather that lethargy that shows itself in the aversion for all exertion, entailing pain and hardship. For labour is the law of success; and the price of progress can be paid only in the currency of hard work. Effort is nature’s law: it is only by walking that a child learns to walk; only by its exercise that any faculty can develop; only by sweat that bread is won. Big brains must rot like useless lumber except their possessor is prepared to rack them.

It is work that has made, work that is making, work that shall make the great men of the world. For when a man can work and will work, his work must tell; and, genius is nothing but an Infinite capacity for taking pains; or, as they say: nine tenths perspiration, and one tenth inspiration.

Therefore, I can see that except I am prepared to cast off all sloth and fear, except I, am prepared to work until I am fit to drop and die, my failure, in life, is certain. But since I have resolved to make something out of my life, I see that I must, out of sheer necessity, become a votary of unremitting, assiduous and systematic work. The following are the rules that shall guide me on this line.

- I. In all my life, duty shall always receive the first consideration. I resolve to make myself master of that calling which God shall assign to be my lot on earth: it is a contortion of right order, and, thus, a serious wrong, to be diligent in what I have taken up, over and above, and slovenly in what I am in duty bound to do.
- II. Whenever I take a work in hand, no means or method, necessary or conducive to the success of that work, shall be neglected merely because I feel a distaste for the said means or method.
- III. Since a good deal of the work that I have, and shall have, to do is of an Intellectual kind, I have resolved to cultivate the habit of assiduous and methodic thinking; I must get into the habit of brooding as I go around.
- IV. In all work that I undertake, this shall be the invariable procedure:
 - i. *Think it over,*
 - ii. *Plan it out,*
 - iii. *Tackle it with energy and method*

Furthermore, I must continue, as the work progresses, to seek out new methods of doing it — new improvements. When the same duty comes, round and round again, I shall strive to do it better and in a different way, each time it comes again. Versatility shall be cultivated, and I shall be very careful never to get into a rut; must never become a mindless cog in the wheel of any Establishment.

- V. To guard against this getting into a rut, against my ideas and language becoming stale, I solemnly resolve to remain, a student .all my days! I must not fear to approach any man from whom I can learn, nor to have my mistakes seen and corrected. I must *read* and *observe* and seriously *reflect* on what I gather from reading, observation and experience: in a word, I shall live with my senses wide open, my mind alert and active, till death takes them away from me.
- VI. Whenever, after due reflection, I take up a work, I will never put it down until it is accomplished, no matter how arduous it may be, and how long the time, (be it in years) required for its accomplishment. It shall be tackled drudgingly, day after day, until it is accomplished in full. Such work shall not be influenced by my changing moods: when it is sweet, when it is insipid, even if it becomes so disgusting, that I feel like heaving it away, it must be faced and done to the last. No working by fits and starts, no leaping in the dark, no being slack, no taking the soft road. The work shall be done with vigour, diligence and system, and shall be directed towards a definite goal. This requires that
- a) A course shall be set to cover a number of years and shall be of such a nature that something substantial shall have been gained by the time of its accomplishment,*
- b) I must be almost a slave to a daily, time table.*
- VII. I knock out of my head, once and for all, the idea that I am made for certain types of work and not for others. If a work falls to my lot, whatever be the difficulties it entails, whether I feel that I am made for such work or not, whether it attracts or disgusts or scares, it must be tackled. I have learnt that a man does not know what' he can do, until he tries.
- VIII. Often times, in the past, when good ideas struck me, or when good opportunities came my way, I have let them slip. This is a thing I am resolved should never occur-again — that a brilliant idea should be allowed to go without an attempt at its incarnation; a chance which may never come again let to pass away for ever. The chief thing which

holds me back from such attempts is the fear that the idea might not work, that, it might fail. But I am coming to believe that the very attempt to do something worthy and great is success in itself. Better to have tried and failed than never to have tried at all; and the failure of the high soul is far sublimer, than all the achievements of those, who never hazard a departure from the beaten track of mediocrity.

- IX. If I ever get the chance of learning something, whatever it may be, whatever my distaste for that thing, it shall not go unlearned.
- X. I find in myself the sloth-inspired disposition of entrusting the working out of my ideas to others. Let me remember that the successful incarnation of an idea depends on the energy with which such incarnation is pursued; and this, energy, in turn, depends, on the enthusiasm that the protagonist has for his idea. Now it is hardly likely, that another man will be eaten up with more zeal for a thing than he in whose mind the said notion took birth. Therefore, normally, the best protagonist for a cause should be its originator. For me, I am resolved to be cured of that sloth and fear boldly and energetically, I shall shoulder, in every detail, the working out of my plans; whatever help comes from others shall be subsidiary, not essential. My slogan from hence shall be: *Do it Yourself*.
- XI. Yet, I will ever stand in need, of others' help. No man, on this earth, can succeed single-handed. So I must be intensely interested in men and their affairs — never losing the chance of gaining a friend; my hand ever stretched to succour where help is needed; never counting the cost of doing a good turn; and, above all, I must go out, of my way to co-operate with those among whom my lot as a worker is cast.
- XII. As my lot in life shall be that of a man among men, I must cultivate an interest in every department of human life: nothing' should be too insignificant to me; for I must be deeply interested in all the affairs of men, if I have to be all things to all men.
- XIII. In everything that I undertake, my aim shall ever be high: to do that thing as any of its masters did it; no necessary pains, no legitimate sacrifice, should be too great. I shall never rest satisfied with any

results mediocre.

Judging from the events of my past, from the opportunities I have had, from the talents with which I am believed to be blest (if that is true), and from the desire that eats up my heart, it seems to me that, if providence is urging my steps towards any activity, it is towards authorship. So I here today choose writing as the second goal of my life. My work in life, whether I become a priest or not, shall be the cultivation of young hearts and souls — the Christian education of youth! I shall, therefore, leave nothing undone to become, and to succeed, as an author; and, if I fail, it shall be after supreme efforts to succeed.

Right from now, I must set myself earnestly to acquire and to equip myself with the panoply necessary for success in this field. Keen mind, indomitable will, kind heart, sharp eye, dumb mouth, mastery of expression, tireless hand — such is the armour I must don; my mind must be packed full, my knowledge ordered, my language crisp and powerful.

Writing is an art: as an art, it has its rules and principles; and these I must have at the tips of my fingers. My aim is to serve, by this activity, the whole Nation of the Cameroons; and so it is absolutely necessary that I make myself master of *English and French*.

“Noli Judicare”

Enugu, Friday, 20th February

It has been remarked that it is a tendency with catholic churchmen to condemn or snub things, merely because they are not catholic things about which, more often than not, they know next to nothing.

I take a deep interest in the lives of great men, and this has sometimes been frowned upon, when the heroes were not saints in the Church's sense. Once, during *my* Philosophy Course, I had to read a paper before the class in which paper I discussed, according to the philosophical principles of the Beautiful, a character, a personality, which I considered sublime. I shall not forget the reaction of the class and of the professor, when I announced that I had chosen, as my hero, the celebrated Indian leader, Mahatma Gandhi. The fellows looked up surprised, almost stunned; and the professor wore a disapproving pout.

But, before I was halfway through, it was evident that their sentiments were completely changed; and, when I finished reading, the professor remarked, "I have learned something today."

I remember too the reaction of some Seminarians, when I bought the book *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, by Dale Carnegie; a book chuck-full, from the opening sentence to the last, of deep practical wisdom and invaluable principles for dealing with men — a book that every churchman should welcome with thanks; and apply with profit. But the remarks that some of the Seminarians made about it were so cutting that I shall never forget them. I wondered how men who were supposed to have done Philosophy, and, therefore, should have open minds, could talk like this about a book of which they hadn't read even the first line. And I knew there were some of them there who needed the guidance of such a book; and needed it badly.

Calling these things to mind, I have resolved never to allow any prejudice to blind my eye and warp my judgment. Never shall I pass, sentence in thought, in, word, or in writing, against any thing or person, except the case against the said thing or person is proved to the hilt; and except it is my duty to censure.

Wherever I find any thing that is true, good and noble — in books, in the lives of men, within, the Church or without the Church,— I shall admit it is so, shall admire it, shall imitate it and try to make it my own.

Where there is question, of things which are wont to be abused, I shall never condemn without distinguishing; allow what is good, show, the use, point, out the dangers, and condemn the abuse as vehemently as you please,

I will be very careful never to accept what one mail says against another without verifying for myself the truth of the report, without finding out, diligently, whether it is supported by objective, unquestionable evidence,

It is no argument for a man's guilt that, his accusers are good men; good men, too, in despite of snow-white, intentions, can be mistaken; and often are. For ever, in these matters, my rule shall be, as I learnt it from Father Walsh: no evidence, no judgment; or, as Sophocles put it, three hundred, years before Christ: *I impute no guilt, until guilt is proved.*

It is far better to tie your lips and say nothing in. a case like this, than to rush to a conclusion and pass, sentence only to discover, thereafter, that you have been misled, and would have, to withdraw what you have said.

The Law of Kindness

Enugu, 2nd April 1953, Maundy, Thursday

When I think of Kindness in man, I am reminded of the Nile in flood, overspreading adjacent lands with its waters and its silt, and raising fields, of plenty from sand and desert aridness.

A really kind man is nobler far than this: he is God in miniature; for just as goodness flowing from that Infinite Fount gave the world its being; just so, goodness pouring over from the loving heart of man, makes this joyless world happier.

Kindness is essentially a motion outward, from self to the other: self for, the moment is forgotten and the other is enshrined in its place. So, from the very nature of things, kindness should be absolutely selfless, should look for no return whatsoever.

Consider again the flooded Nile: in the lands of eternal rains it makes dampness damper; in the lands of perennial drought, it is a boon and priceless blessing. And yet, even here, for the floods to work their good, the waters must be controlled by irrigation works, and the fields must be tilled. So it is with kindness.

To do good, it must go not to abundance, but where there is need. Does this rob kindness of universality? No; for everyman you meet is needy, in one way or another, at one time or another. This only means that kindness should know what need it should succour, and succour that need in season; and that withal, it must be judiciously channelled or dispensed.

In other words, kindness must not be wanton; it must not be precipitate; it must not be foolish; it must not be officious: it must be gentle, controlled and disciplined; it must be intelligent and discreet; it must have keen sight to scrutinize where it is needed, in what form it is needed, and how much of it is needed. Look at the Nile again: whence comes its flood? — from the rains of the skies, which in turn take their rise, from: the waters of the ocean. Thus-genuine-kindness must come, not merely from the kindly heart of man, but ultimately from the Limitless Ocean of all good— God. It cannot be otherwise, if kindness would be genuine.

I likened it above to the creative act of God. God made the world; the kind man makes the world happier. The closer this analogy, the more sterling will kindness be. For true kindness is Godlike and essentially supernatural. It *is* only thus that it can be imbued with that dynamic quality which makes it, in the efforts of feeble man, the most powerful force next but to the grace of

God.

Glance at the Nile once again: Its influence goes first and foremost to the lands on its banks. So, that kindness is lopsided, misdirected, which, neglecting the visible needy that pine a near, goes afar to do its good. The kind man's world should be the world of .woe around him. Does he neglect the rest of mankind by this? No; for the world is one and he that helps the part helps the whole.

Kindness knows no break, it takes no holidays: it is a continuous giving. So it must be, first and foremost, a giving, not of things we don't always possess, like material goods; but of those goods which any man, who is willing, can always afford to give — a kind thought, a kind word, loving and selfless service. Such indeed is kindness, such the virtue I must 'acquire.

Give me *not* the frigid goodness which, like-a frozen, shrunken stream, with waters below the banks, lies buried, cold and clear, beneath the ice; the goodness of the man who seeks nought but self uprightness; who seeks, but to be the grave, polished, model gentleman. Give me goodness brimming over, rich and strong and warm and true. I won have the shrunken stream: mine must be, from now and ever, an eternal Nile in flood.

A Hymn to Kindness

“Kindness is one of God's best gifts-to the world,
It drives gloom and darkness from souls.
It puts hope into fainting hearts.
Kindness sweetens sorrow, it lessens pain.
Kindness discovers unsuspected beauties of human character.
Kindness calls forth a response from all that is best in souls.
Kindness purifies, glorifies, ennobles all that it touches.
Kindness opens the floodgates of children's laughter.
Kindness gathers the tears of repentant love.
Kindness lightens the burden of weariness.
Kindness stops the torrent of angry passion,
Kindness takes the sting from failure.
Kindness kindles courageous ambition.
Kindness lifts the unfortunate.
Kindness leads back the wayward.
Kindness walks in the steps of Our Saviour.” (Unknown origin)

Kindness of Thought

Enugu, Friday, 20th February

Thought is the main-spring of all human actions; for, as a man thinks, so does he feel, and as a man feels, so does he act; no man can behave but according to the thoughts that have formed the warp and woof of his mind.

If I want to plant kindness in my heart, I must root out all unkindness from it — unkindness of thought, of word and action. It is only when this is done, and the heart is cultivated, by persistent practice, that the vigorous virtue can grow.

So, if heart and mind are to be purified, I must sweep clean out of them, all rancour, virulence, spite bitterness, and resentfulness — in short, I must rid them of all those thoughts that pollute my mind, when I come up against treatment that I think is unfair; or when I judge that a policy or an act, on the part of superiors, especially when I am affected, is wrong and undeserved.

Purging Heart and Mind

To work this work of purification, I muse have for my broom the bundle of those considerations which, of themselves, will expel from my soul, as light, expels darkness, the sombre gloom of bitterness. Therefore, from this on, the following principles shall become the theme, for me, of perennial meditation.

God has a holy purpose, in my regard, for every wrong, however slight, that He allows me to suffer at the hands of men. The sharp word that wounds and festers in the heart, the most viciously unfair treatment — all are for my good.

Therefore, if I revolt against such treatment by getting bitter against him that inflicts it, I ruin God's purpose and lose the benefit he intends me to reap by bearing the treatment joyously.

So I must shrink back from every thought of rancour against my wronger; and looking upon him as the instrument of God's Providence, I will diligently set myself to seek that-holy purpose which that Providence has in view, in allowing me to be treated like this. That found, as it must be, I will then strive to think thoughts of thanks both to God and to his instrument. The importance of the subjective, as distinguished from the objective, is a thing to take good note of, when there is question of passing judgment on human behaviour: an act can be thoroughly criminal, but its doer as innocent

as a babe.

Many persons may see the same object, but each will view it from his own angle, and from his mind accordingly; and so the reproduction of the object, in their various minds, will vary; for each one's view of the said external thing will be determined by the degree of the keenness of his intelligence, his native temperament, his past experiences and his present circumstances. Hence the importance of taking note of these factors before you dare to hazard a judgment on any person.

Indeed, "if there is any secret of success, it lies in the ability to get the other person's point, of view and see things from his angle as well as from your own."

Therefore, since I cannot speak with certainty about the state of any man's mind, I must not judge him guilty whatever he may do. The most I can say is this: the thing that this man has done, considered in itself, as something objective, and outside the mind, is wrong. Is he guilty? I don't know. And since I don't know, I must decide in his favour; for, it cannot be over-emphasized that no man should be judged guilty until his guilt is proved.

Therefore, if a man wrongs me, I shall strive to view the thing from his own side, shall strive to get him as many excuses as I can; I should never impute evil motives.

Let this truth sink deeply into your mind, that no man is essentially evil: there is no man but hates what is wrong, and loves what is right.

The real state of the case is that man's nature is corrupt and drags him down. Often, as it has been proved, he is the unfortunate heir to vicious tendencies for which remote ancestors are to be held, to blame, they call this phenomenon atavism. Then too there are those morbid states of mind and nerve which exercise great influence on the actions of certain persons; for, just as the body can be ill, in like manner, the mind and the emotions can become diseased, and, often, very seriously.

Then again you have that inscrutable phenomenon where a man, with unbroken years of upright living to his credit, suddenly suffers a complete moral break-down. How then can you dare to judge when you think of such possibilities? Indeed the injunction "Judge not" is as highly philosophical as it is charitable. Therefore, it is sound and large-hearted wisdom, when wronged by another, to take the sympathetic view that his action is due, not to wickedness, but to ignorance; or, if ignorance cannot be pleaded, to human weakness.

The Positive Way

[Editor's Note] For the second time Cameroon Panorama resumes the publication of the serial 'Random Leaves from my Diary' by Dr. Bernard Fonlon, Cameroon's leading Catholic author. The serial was stopped in December 1976 because the Catholic Information Service hoped to put it in booklet form. After serious thought, the idea had to be put aside because of soaring costs of paper and printing. However, we gladly resume the serial in this July issue of Cameroon Panorama for the benefit of our readers.

Enugu, Friday, 20th February

The foregoing considerations are in the main negative in nature: — don't get bitter; don't judge. Alone, they will, not serve to build a generous character; for kindness is essentially "outpouring goodness," and so it is imperative, in this matter, that the negative side should be counterbalanced, by a vigorous positive. On this head the following are the principles:

I. The most grim and gory desperado you'll meet, must have some good in him; for there is no man so wicked as to have no redeeming trait. If that is true of desperate criminals, how truer far is it of the ordinary people around us!

There is not one of them but possesses a lot of good in him, and, if we sincerely want to see that good, our search will not be long. Looking for the good in those around me must become the frequent occupation on my mind. Into the bargain, I will examine the ill-treatments I have received in the past, to discover the after-benefits that I reaped from them; and, on finding those (as I must), I will strive to stir, in my heart, sincere sentiments of gratitude for those who were the cause of them.

II. But should a redeeming trait be hard to find in a man, I will reflect that there are those who hold him dear notwithstanding; — those who would brook not even an unkind word against him: his friends, his relative, his mother — even God!

Thus I must make it a daily practice to strive to centre my mind on the good qualities of those with whom I live: I will search for as many as possible and pile them up one upon the other until their very weight stifles whatever prejudice, against them, is purging in my mind.

III. As my laws -show, I am strung up to be a fervent votary of Truth, Fearlessness, Non-violence, Drastic Discipline, Unremitting Assiduous Work. How on earth can I achieve this sublime end, except by meeting obstacles, harshness, ingratitude, and all manner of wrong? It is by running the gauntlet of .hard buffeting that we become strong; and, if I yearn for the strength, I must be ready, and grateful, for the buffeting. Therefore he who treats me viciously does me incalculable good: he is ray benefactor; he is my friend.

IV. I have resolved that the Priesthood and Authorship shall be the joint goals of my life, and- I see that kindness, which wells like a ceaseless fountain right from the heart, is desperately important to both.

To the Priesthood: in the work of winning souls, it is the priest's most powerful weapon next but to the grace of God.

To the Authorship: if the writer writes to influence men, to rouse the good in them, to get action, or to impress and convince, or even merely to instruct, he cannot win them to his side, except every sentence he writes rings with sympathetic understanding and sheer goodness of nature. Let every passage show that you love your readers, and your, book cannot fail. For priest as for writer, kindness is a must: I must either .become kind through and through, or my life's work is marred.

V. Therefore I must be a genuine lover of men. I must *be* for ever seeking ways and means to gladden the lives of my friends and of those among whom I live and work.

VI. I should never pass thoughtless by any person in suffering — the sick, the broken-hearted and the bereaved. Pause a while to observe and reflect, in order to impress in your heart what the victim must: feel in such a plight, and strive to say or do something that will sweeten the gall and make his burden light. Remember that gloomy thoughts and expressions only make the load of sorrow heavier: a cheery soothing word — that is the effective anodyne: it seldom fails!

VII. I should never give quarter to the thought that those to whom. I do good owe me thanks. Rather I should regard myself as owing thanks to God, who has deigned to allow me to be the humble instrument of his Providence: I must thank him for the happiness. He has allowed me to give, and enjoy, by

doing good to his children.

VIII. In general, all that I have written about kindness of thought can be summarized by saying that I should never tolerate in my mind, about any person, any thing that I would not dare to tell him to his face; but rather that I should go all out to garner, in my mind, good thoughts about men, and saturate my heart with love for those whom I know or with whom I come in contact; and for the human kind at large.

Religious Education Vacation Courses

The first ever Catholic Teachers' Religious Education Vacation Course which began on 12th, July, 1976 was opened by His Lordship Bishop Pius Awa on 13th July, 1976 accompanied by the Catholic Education Secretary, Mr. William Banboye. They explained in brief that if: this Course was successful subsequent Courses might be arranged at J.M.Nasako, Mbonge Provincial or Divisional Centres instead of just one Centre.

But why Religious Education when all announcements for employment elude Religious Knowledge as a qualification for any type of job. And in primary schools the pupils too end with a First School Leaving Certificate of Religious Knowledge.

The Law of Kindness

Kindness of Word

With kindness of thought firmly established, the rest follows inevitably.

But when kindness is given expression, there is something of the highest importance, something without which the most thoughtful kindness must be gravely marred, namely — the way it is done!

Remember: — Not what you do, but how you do it — that is the chiefest thing.

The expression must be gentle, it must be gracious, it must give the impression that it is done with joy and pleasure; must give the impression that, rather than feeling that he is honouring, the doer is feeling that he is being honoured, by doing good to the persons concerned. This impression must not be a mere appearance, but must well up from deep and genuine generosity. Not that he should say this in so many words; the doer should

rather let the persons read it themselves from the way the deed is-done.

With regard to words:

I. I forbid myself, for once and all, all use of imperatives, wounding words, dogmatic language, sarcasm, — in short, every manner of expression calculated to hurt. I should never order fellows around, even if these be children. No excuse shall be pleaded, on any grounds, to justify such conduct. Before you speak, pause and reflect to couch your thought in gentle and gracious language.

II. I have the queer tendency of being brusque with persons whom *I perceive to cherish some affection for me; whilst, on the other hand, I almost cower before the hostile.*

Though I should, not pay hostility with hostility, being a votary of non-violence, yet it is criminal to be rough and brusque with those who love me. Often, when you have alienated their good will, by such behaviour, you try, by all manner of means, to win them back, only to find that it is too late.

With all my friends, especially those who took the initiative, I must be ever so thankful, ever so appreciative, ever so gentle, ever so kind; I must go out of my way to pay generosity with generosity, and not with-thoughtless brusqueness,

III. If I must never think thoughts of virulence, afortiori, I should never give them utterance.

IV. Never should I talk about my kindness; and, when I do good to others, I should never tell them what it has cost me to do it: no good done is worthwhile, if the doing does not entail sacrifice. Then, if-sacrifice is the natural, inevitable cost of kindness, why talk about it?

V. I rule all quarrelling and heated arguing completely out of my life: this needs no further emphasis. In all your speech, be ever so thoughtful, ever so gentle, ever so kind.

The Law of Kindness

Kindness of Action

I. As with thoughts and words, so with acts: rudeness, abruptness, must be ruthlessly rooted out; and graciousness, planted in their place.

II. When, it comes to doing something to help a person or to make him happy, I should think no cost too much, no pains too great. How when I look back at history and ponder, I see that, a leader must suffer for his people so must a man for his friends. Greater love, than this no man hath, that; “a man lay down his life for his friends.”

III. You can sometimes hurt especially sensitive natures, more by coldness, and indifference than, by positive hostility. Therefore, while...shrinking back from noisy methods I must strive by warmth of expression, by cheerfulness; to shed happiness around me.

IV. I resolve to be an ardent student of human nature, all my days, in order to know how best to treat men.

V. I must strive ‘never’ to let others, know what I suffer, if I can help it. You rob fellows of; their joy by moaning and groaning and complaining, or by wearying their ears with a catalogue or litany of your woes.

VI. When you are at the head, and, fellows misbehave, do not react as though they have done you a personal wrong. If God, whom we offend so often, is so patient and loving towards sinners, what right have I to rave against them?

When dealing with erring brethren, think of: the high potential of evil in your own self; consider that you would be worse (and who can say he is not!), but for the grace of God: that will make you gentle. Think-of Christ!

“Woman, has no one condemned thee?”

“No man, Lord.”

“Neither will I.”

If this was Christ’s manner towards a woman “taken red-handed in

adultery, why should we sinning men presume to act towards those who err as though, we ourselves are above reproach?"

However, as custodians of the law, we will often have to punish. Here gentleness, far from being excluded, should be the rule. Let the, culprit see that it is not you that are punishing him: rather it is he that has brought the penalty upon himself, by violating: an Order that must be righted. Such then are the canons of Kindness.

All through my life, I will strive to think ill of no man, but to think; all the: good I can of every man. I will strive to speak ill...of no man, but to speak all the good I can of every man; I will strive: to do ill to no man, but to do all the good I can to every man. I resolve to take all pains to make kindness clean, clear, manly and true, the chiefest hallmark of my conduct and. character.

Humiliation and Humility

Enugu, Friday 27th November

The things that are happening to me, at present, are making one idea clearer and clearer to my mind, from day to day — the immense value of humiliation. A man left to himself with everything as his heart desires, with success wherever he puts his hand, will end up in pride as surely as a bubble swells and rises; and rises but to burst; for, when a man gets drunk with a sense of his own importance, his fall is inevitable; and the higher he has risen, the greater the force with which he comes crashing to the ground.

Humiliation brings you down on your knees, brings you back to yourself, and deflates you like men deflate a balloon; you see your own misery; it dawns upon you that you are nothing; and, if you respond to the touch of grace, and bow under your humiliation in silence and gratitude, it is then you will, hear the voice of God.

I see it plain today: humility is a great, virtue; Humiliation a great blessing; and no man can get anywhere on earth except, he is prepared to lie, yes, beneath the very dust on which men trample; except he is prepared for those situations, when your head is low in innocent shame and you feel despicable even in your own eyes. Thorough humility is my goal from today; and from its steadfast pursuit, there shall be no turning back. I do not pray that the gall of my humiliations should be sweetened in the least; nor do I

pray that the cup be taken from my lips ere it is drained to the dregs.

I only beg of God to keep me far, far from that humiliation which comes through sin, when a man has become so blind, in his pride, that nothing but the shame of a great moral collapse or catastrophe can open his eyes.

Moved by these thoughts, I submit myself whole-heartedly to my present lot. Indeed, it is with sentiments of deep gratitude that I do so. For I am positive that the day will come when, seeing the good it shall-have done to-me, I will feel like dancing in the very street, that I had the experience I am going through today. And being so certain of this, I hasten to give thanks in the very throes of my agony; I hasten to give thanks to God before the benefits arrive.

As said elsewhere, in this diary, to become a writer is one of the clearest wishes of my heart; and now with the priesthood all but lost and gone, writing is the only ambition that is left. I have learnt, from history, that they write best who have suffered most. And I am inclined to believe, that the things that I am passing through, today, are one of God's mysterious ways of preparing me for that career; for now I see that it is by suffering and sorrow that we can acquire that power of emotion, and feeling, and compassion, so essential to effective writing.

I see that God wants to purify my life through, deep humiliations and I submit to the buffeting.

Leadership

Onitsba, Monday, 6th September 1954

When I look-at my life, at the course it has taken, at the shaping it has received, I feel, as I have said elsewhere in this diary, that, perhaps, I am headed for a share in the leadership of my people. Thinking about it this morning, it struck me vividly that the leader of a people bears a very close resemblance to a draught horse. For such a horse:

- i) must see where it is going;
- ii) must shut its eyes completely to the attractions of the wayside must enter into no compromise whatsoever with them;
- iii) must be imbued with the energy that the work requires;
- iv) must be yoked to its burden; .

- v) must be hindered by no fetters;
- vi) must exert all its force to pull the burden;
- vii) must pull it, in concert with, the other horses with which it happens to share the work;
- viii) must pull it in accordance with the orders of the driver.

Looking at these, I saw that, -to make a good leader, it is absolutely necessary that I:

- a) Should know where I am leading the people to;
- b) Should know how best to lead them there; should wage perennial war in my life, against all the attractions, enticements) and seductions of money, ease, pleasure, worldliness; against the thirst and the craving for power and glory; must come to no terms whatsoever with vice; must live in the world, with a spirit that is totally dead to the world.
- c) Should be instinct with moral energy — purity of life, fortitude, humility, constructive thinking;
- d) Should be bound to my people by bonds of selfless love;
- e) Must be unfettered by family responsibilities; must acquire economic independence;
- f) Must spare no pains in the service of my people;
- g) Must work in harmony with co-leaders;
- h) Must toil in union with God.

These, therefore, are the hallmarks of leadership that I must bear, should that role fall to my lot, namely — Comprehensive Learning, Death to the World, Moral Energy, Love of my People, Economic Independence, Assiduous Industry, Concord with Co-workers, Union with God.

I have spoken at ample length of some of these and touched upon others in my journal already; however the following needs a few words more.

Economic Independence

When you depend entirely on employers for your living, you are fettered and gagged; and, often, you will find yourself forced to be silent when you ought to speak out; often you will find yourself outwardly supporting, for fear of victimization, what you hate in your heart and detest and revolt against. When you are no man's servant, you can say what you know to be right, and say it fearlessly; for there is no master to offend, no job to lose.

Economic Independence then is a prime necessity to him. Whose role is

to lead; and as soon as my education is, to a good measure, accomplished, I must, as soon as feasible, make myself a self-supporting man, with a view to securing for myself the widest freedom of action.

Leadership: Union with God

Perseverance in the observance of a code, such as I have drawn, up, is absolutely impossible, if it relies on merely human strength, 'however enormous such strength may be.

Arid, thus, Union with God is imperative and essential to Leadership for many reasons. Chief among them are the following:

(I) God is the source from which the individual and society take their rise, and the end which they must seek; everything else, on this earth, leadership included, is meant as a means to the attainment of this great goal.

(II) The governance and guidance of peoples is, in its very self, God's work; men who take part in it are merely instruments of His providence; thus it stands, from the very nature of things, that they who lead should lead in union with God.

(III). God means that each man should save his soul, through the task He has assigned to him on earth. But there is no saving one's soul through one's work, except it is done for God, and with God. Therefore, Leadership, as a task assigned to men, from Above, demands to be done in union with God.

(IV) When I look into the arena of politics, I see how exposed leaders are to temptations of arrogance and pride and waywardness and intolerance, yes, and even of wickedness and cruelty. Success and power and sycophancy and, applause are bound to intoxicate a man and run away with him, except he has perfect mastery of himself. So I see that the higher a man rises in office and power, the more he should humble himself before God, if he is to escape catastrophe.

Nothing is so efficacious in keeping leadership farsighted, deep-sighted, clean and steady as love, and knowledge, and, purpose, steeped in a Deep Religious Faith. A political career pursued, regardless of God, is one of the shortest cuts to ruin, and misery, and disappointment, and bitterness that may rankle and fester to the end of your days. But in what does Union with God consist? I have a clear answer. When a soul is purged of sin, God's

grace inundates that soul and God himself comes along and makes his abode therein. That is union with God.

If this union is true and complete, it must entail the union of minds and wills; which means that the man will always see things as God sees them, and will always act in accordance with God's will, as manifested by His Laws. This threefold union of being and faculties, of soul and mind and of will and purpose, to God, by Grace, Knowledge and Loving Service, is what is popularly known as holiness. Union with God is Sanctity. It entails the following things:

- i) Deep faith and absolute confidence in God,
- ii) Assiduous practice of Virtue,
- iii) Perennial War against Sin,
- iv) An abiding Sense of Compunction,
- v) A continuous striving for an ever-increasing purification of soul.

To attain this union, three means are indispensable:

The frequent and fervent reception of the Sacraments of the Eucharist and Penance. The Sacrifice of the Mass must become the centre of my life and frequent confession a regular practice.

There must be earnest and regular prayer, both oral and mental; and, for this latter, spiritual reading is imperative; so too is the examination of conscience, if the work of daily purification is to progress.

There must be mortification of one sort or other — the most obvious one being fidelity to duty.

I am realizing more and more that there is no limit to the strength of a reign who is backed up by God; and a really saintly man, with a boundless faith in God and a snow-white soul, can work wonders where men fail, that are armed but with great worldly powers. For success as a leader, I must launch straight-away into a determined and sustained effort to become daily less and less worldly; must put up a determined fight for purity of life. Intimate Union with God — this is from hence the great goal of my life. (*To*

be continued.)

Let us have trust in God and comfort ourselves with the thought that a!! is well, if it happens according to the Will of the Almighty, since He knows best what is good for our temporal as well as eternal happiness and salvation.

(Mozart)

The dictionary tells me that to efface means to wipe out, to obliterate. Self-effacement, therefore, means the wiping out, the complete destruction, in me, of that driving tendency which impels me towards forwardness, self-assertion, and self-advertisement. It means that I must not speak, if no useful purpose is served by my speech; that I must not appear before others if there is no need for my presence; it means silence and retirement.

From this it follows that self-effacement is not just, synonymous with inaction. No; a self-effacer could be, notwithstanding, a very active man; he could even be a man whose days are spent in public, who must be heard and seen. Self-effacement only aims at dealing a death-blow at the “ego-centric,” at self-centredness; and, thus to purify, the motive for activity, of all selfishness. As a self-effacer, I should never do anything to attract attention; I should never display any talents that I may have, to win the plaudits of admirers; I should never do an act of kindness to gain the love, or the thanks, of those to whom it is done.

But someone might say: “The desire to be great, the craving to make a name, has been, the driving force without which we would miss today a good many of the-benefits which ambitious, men — scientists, philosophers, scholars, statesmen, great soldiers — have won for humanity. Indeed, what thanks has the world to offer to those who, shunning publicity, wrapped, their, talents in a napkin and passed their lives in the shadows, preferring to remain alone and unknown?”

I make answer: the world has no thanks, the world should have, no thanks, whatsoever, for him who, pleading humility, buries god-given brains, puts his light under a bushel; for, if He has endowed a man with gifts of head, and heart, and hand God expects, as Christ laid down, that that man should develop those talents and put them, to good account.

But the contention that only ambitious men have benefited the world is false. Look at the galaxy of men like-St. Paul, St. Augustine, St. Thomas of Aquinas. In modern times, see Abraham. Lincoln, Booker Washington, Mahatma Ghandi, Louis Pasteur! Of this last, hear what an historian said:

“Il ne cherchait ni la gloire ni la fortune, et travaillait sans relâche dans le calme de son laboratoire. A force de recherches patientes, méthodiques, dirigées avec un génie- extraordinaire, il fit d’importantes découvertes et rendit à l’humanité les plus grands services.”

“He sought neither glory nor gold, and laboured relentlessly in his laboratory. By dint of patient, methodic research guided by a genius above the ordinary, he made important discoveries and rendered to mankind service of the highest order.”

The seeker after worldly, selfish fame may, accidentally, render service to the world; but what does he gain for himself? He is like the man who cast away his substance and wealth, for men and beasts to scramble for, and leaves himself to perish in hunger and penury.

Self-effacement and God

If I spent my whole life-time making a name, what reward will I get, when death has claimed me? The plaudits of the living cannot cross into the regions of dead, and no man can be his own rewarder. Only merit conferred by God can be brought into God’s presence; and God confers merit only on those who have laboured for his glory. He will say, ‘You work very hard indeed; but was it for me? My rewards are for those who spent their lives and gifts for my name. It was for this that I gave to man his talents and his years: *‘Amice, bene cucurristi, sed praeter viam*; friend, you have run a marvellous, race — but you have run outside the track!’

It is the saddest of things for a man to work himself to death, only to find, at the last, that his was a wasted life, having been spent but for self; for the greatest name that a man can make on earth is but one huge bubble, brilliant, dazzling, that bursts and all is gone!

Therefore, I take the warning while life is mine: I, will never go to do good on my own: it is God who has given me my talents and my life, ‘and these shall be spent for him. Before I undertake anything, I must lay it at his feet. If, from the exercise of the said talents, I gain anything in the shape of applause or thanks, I must put them all before Him: nothing for myself, all for Him alone.

This self-effacement is not passiveness, something enervating: it does not rob a man of the driving will to action; it only changes a man, from being self centred, to being God-centred; and, when the love of God seizes a man’s

heart, it can become, within him, a dynamo more powerful than which none other can be found.

The Law of Self-Effacement

Enugu, Friday 10th July 1953

Self-effacement and My Neighbour

As-I see it, self-effacement; is a most powerful means of promoting inward peace in individuals and harmony and charity among neighbours; for it strikes a death-blow against jealousy. Among, those who live and work together, happiness and concord, indeed, can be very badly marred by what are incorrectly referred to as the petty jealousies

Jealousy is seldom petty in itself. It means, a writer says, acid in the individual heart. It enters all but universally into human relations, poisoning them. In the malevolent it is fierce and maddening force which, can perpetrate most dreadful-things. But likewise it tempts the unselfish and the pure of heart, through their sensitive and loving natures. How hard it is to see oneself displaced by others, out-paced in virtue or in performance, put aside in favour of the young. How bitter is the contemplation of one's own eclipse! The best of souls have felt that secret pang, and have learnt from it their own amazing weakness. For that bitterness is really smouldering hate and: near to bursting into destructive flame.

God in his providence¹ has given, to each man his own talents; has allotted to each the opportunities whereby the said talents, through life, shall be developed and exercised; has assigned to each person the particular good deeds he shall accomplish in life.

The thing for, me to do, is to find out what my own gifts are, and then seize every chance to develop, them to, the very highest point, they can reach. The thing for me to do is to be vigilant for opportunities to do good; and do that good to the best of my ability — and then wipe the memory of it clean: out of my mind.

If God has blest my neighbour, and blest him more than me, who am I to question why that should be so? It is a black crime on my part to nourish, bitterness, in my heart, because God has willed that a friend, should out-beggar me by his talents and accomplishments. Far be it from me to allow

such soot to soil my soul!

Rather, I am resolved that, if it shall be in my-power to help a friend to rise, my generosity to help him shall know no stint; if a fellow's achievements merit praise, my prompt appreciation and encouragement shall ring with sterling enthusiasm. I resolve to make it a law of my life to go all out, whenever the occasion arises to the aid of him that is eclipsing me, and help, him to eclipse me the more. I should rejoice that good is done, no matter who it is; that does that good.

It shall never be, my desire to triumph, over anyone; but if I do triumph, where I was obliged to contest, I shall cherish no, joy in such triumph,

A self-effacer is cold and indifferent to both success and failure: he is not puffed-up and elated by the one, nor is he dejected and daunted by the other. He remains unbent and unbeaten in the face of defeat, ever ready to try again. Yet he is quick to recognize a better and to; give hearty credit where credit is due.

For me, this is law: I shall take every beating in good part and recognize the skill; of the man who has licked me; and tolerate no bitterness, whatsoever against him in my heart.

A study of the Sermon on the Mount has convinced me that, by the unclean of heart, is meant, not only those who soil their souls with impurity, but also those who allow their hearts to fester with the venom of jealousy. And save they rid themselves completely of this poison, there can be no rest, no happiness, in this world, for the jealous and the envious; there is a deadly canker eating away their heart.

It rejoices my heart to see in the law of self-effacement a summary of all the legislation I have, laid down for the formation and the consolidation of my character.

It is truth, and fearlessness; for the, 'self-effacer', truth counts for everything, while self counts for nothing; and so he is ready to hand self over: to death that truth might live.

Self-effacement is synonymous with non-violence, love and kindness. Like them, it enjoins that the heart should be purged of all bitterness, and that I should go, all out, to do good to others and do it with no eye on appreciation, love or gratitude.

By saying that there should be no purposeless speech, it directly enjoins silence; and by forbidding forwardness and self-advertisement, it makes, itself the powerful ally of simplicity.

Self-effacement is detachment and discipline; for it entails the ruthless

putting down of greed in man; and greed has been the cause of countless catastrophes, in the history of the world.

It is the law of work laying; down that talents must, by dint of constant labour, be developed to the highest possible degree they can be made to attain.

Self-effacement is submission par excellence; for it brings man on his knees before God; it acknowledges Him as the origin and the end of human talents; and, thus human life and activities, which of themselves impetuously tend, to headlong selfishness, are subdued and made to tend harmoniously Godward. I give, thanks to God who has helped me to light on this principle, this law of self-effacement, that is: may, He so assist me with his grace a hat, by dint of diligent practice, I may ingraft it into the very substance of my being. Thus confirmed, I can become an effective tool in his hands, expending all that I am, and all that I have, disinterestedly, selflessly and noiselessly, for the good of my people, and the glory of His name.

What is more, in a world, where the insatiate yearnings for pleasure, where the burning itch to get rich quick, where the morbid craving for fame and power are eating away, without respite, at the very vitals of the human heart; — in a world, where, life alone, by itself, is, in the very nature' of things, anguish: and anxiety, by reason of this, that man is plagued, relentlessly, by manifold, fears, by despair and frustration, by a torturing sense of insecurity, by the precariousness of health and livelihood, by the caprice of fortune, by the inscrutable vicissitudes of. Life: is it any wonder, that, in a world such as this, in despite of prodigious scientific achievements, in despite of unprecedented prosperity and galloping material welfare; — is it any wonder that the incidence of strokes, or nervous break-downs, of mental derangements, and of suicides is on the rise, alarmingly; and this, paradoxically, peculiarly, more in those countries, where they have never had it so good where citizens are the pampered children of the Welfare State — America, Europe, Scandinavia especially?

In a world where greed is rife, and thoughtless heartlessness is rank, where it is, the weak to the wall, (as Nietzsche decreed), where it is every man for himself where loneliness has become a major, problem, in spite of the teeming millions; — in a world, where man is harried and harassed by hate and jealousy, by treachery and fraud', by slander and bitterness; where might is right, where the wielding of power, more often than, not, degenerates into tyranny and cruelty; indeed, in some cases, even into sheer, ruthless wickedness; in a world, where wanton random, indiscriminate violence has

become endemic where war and the butchery and the slaughter of innocent men by the million has become a common phenomenon: — is it any wonder that, in a world such as this, life becomes unliveable, a veritable nightmare, and men are compelled either to rise in revolt to assert their manhood, or to resort to fawning obsequiousness and cringing cowardice, in order to survive?

Indeed, this *Weltbild*, this sombre, spectre of life, makes one powerfully inclined to agree with Sophocles who wrote the following in his famous play, *Oedipus at Colonus*, two thousand four hundred years ago:

*'Show me the man who asks an over-abundant share
Of life, in love with more, and ill content
With less, and I will show, you- one in love
With foolishness.
In the accumulation of many years
Pain is in plenty, and joy not anywhere
When life is over-spent.
And at the last there is the same release
When death appears,
Unheralded by music, dance, or song.
To give us peace
Say what you will, the best of boons is not to be.*

Such is life, and such the ineluctable lot of man. (And, in the view of the pessimist, 'ancient', tragic playwright, arid poet, it is best, for man, never to have been born. Today, many a man would say yes with him.)

Now, tell me this: if all the marvellous means of well-being, that the modern world supplies, have failed to make man happy, how then can even a meagre measure of solace and peace of soul be found on this earth?...

As I see it, this is well-nigh impossible: man cannot be saved from anxiety, and despair unless his, heart, and mind, and will are drastically drilled, and disciplined, and, schooled in virtue. It is only thus that he can escape disquiet and anguish; it is only thus that he can live with malice towards none, with charity for. All with firmness in the right and in union with God.

That is why truth, and courage, and gentleness, and kindness, and, selflessness, and the spirit of poverty, and love and compassion, in thought and word and deed; — that is why self-effacement, and, humility, and

forbearance, and detachment, and drastic discipline, and faith, and submission to the will of God are necessary virtues, — yes, indeed, categorical imperatives — if man and society shall win a measure of hope, and peace of heart and mind, in this world of woe. That is why, even the unbeliever, at the end-of this endurance, baffled and bewildered, in the heart of harrowing storm and dire distress, when other helpers fail and, comforts-flee, comes back to himself, and it dawns upon him, that real, genuine solace, in this turbulent world, can only be found when men abide in Him who is ‘Help of the helpless’; — that the human heart, which the Maker has made for Himself, shall know no rest, until it rests in God.

Conclusion

Enugu, 8th December 1952

These principles which I have treated, as they came, at random, are the laws which I have, this day, adopted to shape the growth of my soul for the rest of my life. They are, for the most part, the outcome of the crisis, the torture which, my soul underwent, as recorded some pages, back in this journal.

This: year has been, in a psychological, way, the hardest I have ever gone through: there were, periods when my soul was literally on the rack, and I have learnt that the pains, which torment the flesh, are as nothing compared to the pangs of the soul. I came within an ace of a nervous break-down, within an ace of the ruin of the purpose .of my life. With God's grace I have survived the crisis; with God's help I have resolved to make something of my life; and, in the words of the hymn, my soul cries in suppliant prayer:

My God, accept my heart this day,
And make, it always thine;
That I no more from thee may stray;
No more from thee decline.

In the agony of the crisis to which I have just referred, I groped round for something to stay me, something to save me from complete collapse. I found it in Ghandi and Lincoln and in the Sermon on the Mount. Yes, the very formulation of this code derived its inspiration from the principles of the Indian Mahatma.

If I do succeed in this quest, I shall owe my success, in good measure, to the studies above mentioned. I have learnt from them that few things can so grip the human heart, few things have such dynamic power to impel a soul up the heights, of virtue; indeed, few things, perhaps, can be, have been, so instrumental in the making of great lives, as the Lives of Great Men, You can spend years dinning into fellows' ears cold, dry as dust principles; and these principles may, after your years, of effort, remain, in their hearts, as cold arid as dry as dust. But show them these principles embodied and enshrined in a noble life; then you shake them up from lethargy, then there will be resolves, then there will be attempts at emulation, attempts which may end in the addition of a few names, to the Roll of Great Lives. For my part, I am so convinced of the efficacy of the examples of such lives, that I am resolved to

make them a part of my life-study.

As for these laws that I have made for myself, I have sworn that they shall not remain a dead letter. I look upon them from this day of their adoption as solemn vows. To, keep them well, and keep them thorough, demands first that they must become the warp and woof of my daily thought; and, secondly, that they should grip my heart. If this is to be, they must become the subject, to me first, of constant study, and next, of perennial meditation. Study will make me have them at my fingers tips, so to speak; and, so, whenever an occasion arises for the practice of any, that one will spring naturally into my mind; I will come to understand them better, and with them as the basis I will be able to arrive at higher principles. Therefore, as new lights strike me from time to time, they shall be embodied in this code.

Meditation will turn, them into prayer, and, by the grace of God, who alone can touch the human heart that he himself has made, they will so possess my soul that my will will become inflexible in their observance. Without God we can do nothing, and to strive at moral reform; independently of the, Author of Morality, would be mindless foolery, an attempt that must end in dismal failure.

With the adoption of these laws I have taken the final: plunge into the battle for virtue: there shall be no coming out except with victory. At all events, will do my best, and God, I trust, will do the rest.

I am further impelled to take this rough and rugged road by the thought that God, perhaps, has marked me to play a leader's role among my people. If that is so, then mine is a sacred and serious call and I must allow no personal feelings, no fears and failings to mar that mission.

Ours is a country, poor and lowly, a country which counts for nothing even in this part of Africa. I am resolved to take my Stand with those who fight for its uplift. I am resolved to give my share, in the fullest and loftiest measure, to foster that struggle! I am resolved that this land, poor and lowly, shall be rich and great, not so much with material wealth and worth, as with that higher wealth and nobleness, which consists, essentially, in greatness of soul, on the part of her children. I am resolved to play my part, unswervingly, so that this country which counts for so little, today, in human eyes, shall see a brighter morrow, and stand high, in heaven's eyes; that her name, now unknown, and, perhaps, despised, shall win respect.

Indeed, this *Weltbild*, this sombre spectre of life, makes one powerfully inclined to agree with Sophocles, who wrote the following in his famous play,

Oedipus at Colonus, two thousand four hundred years ago:

*“Show me the man who asks an over-abundant share
Of life, in love with more, and ill content
With less, and I will show you one in love
With foolishness.
In the accumulation of many years
Pain is in plenty, and joy not anywhere
When life is over-spent.
And at the last there is the same release
When death appears,
Unheralded by music, dance, or song,
To give us peace.
Say what you will, the best of boons is not to be.*

Such is life, and such the ineluctable lot of man. (And, in the view of the pessimist, ancient, tragic playwright and poet, it is best, for man, never to have been born. Today, many a man would say yes with him.)

Now, tell me this: if all the marvellous means of well-being, that the modern world supplies, have failed to make man happy, how then can even a meagre measure of solace and peace of soul be found on this earth?

As I see it, this is well nigh impossible: man cannot be saved from anxiety and despair unless his heart, and mind, and will are drastically drilled, and disciplined, and schooled in virtue. It is only thus that he can escape disquiet and anguish; it is only thus that he can live: *with malice towards none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right, and in union with God.*

That is why truth, and courage, and gentleness, and kindness, and selflessness, and spirit of poverty, and love and compassion, in thought and word and deed; — that is why self-effacement, and humility, and forbearance, and detachment, and drastic discipline, and faith, and submission to the will of God are necessary virtues, — yes, indeed, categorical imperatives — if man and society shall win a measure of hope, and peace of heart and mind, in this world of woe.

That is why, even the unbeliever, at the end of his endurance, baffled and bewildered, in the heart of harrowing storm and dire distress, *‘When other helpers fail and comforts flee’*, comes back to himself, and it dawns upon him, that real, genuine solace, in this turbulent world, can only be found when men abide in Him who is ‘Help of the helpless’; — that the human heart, which

the Maker has made for Himself, shall know no rest, until it rests in God.

What is more, in a world, where the insatiate yearnings for pleasure, where the burning itch to get rich quick, where the morbid craving for fame and power are eating away, without respite, at the very vitals of the human heart; in a world, where life alone, by itself is in the very nature of things, anguish and anxiety, by reason of this, that man is plagued, relentlessly, by manifold fears, by despair and frustration, by a torturing sense of insecurity, by the precariousness of health and livelihood, by the caprice of fortune, by the inscrutable vicissitudes of life: — is it any wonder that, in a world such as this, in despite of prodigious scientific achievements, in despite of unprecedented prosperity and galloping material welfare; — is it any wonder that the incidence of strokes, or nervous break-downs, of mental derangements, and of suicides is on the rise, alarmingly; and this, paradoxically, peculiarly, more in those countries where they have never had it so good, where citizens are the pampered children of the Welfare State — America, Europe, Scandinavia especially?

In a world where greed is rife, and thoughtless heartlessness is rank, where it is, 'the weak to the wall', (as Nietzsche decreed), where it is every man for himself, where loneliness has become a major problem, in spite of the teeming millions; — in a world, where man is harried and harassed by hate and jealousy, by treachery and fraud, by slander and bitterness; where might is right, where the wielding of power, more often than not, degenerates into tyranny and cruelty; indeed, in some cases, even into sheer, ruthless wickedness; in a world, where wanton, random, indiscriminate violence has become endemic, where war and the butchery and the slaughter of innocent men by the million has become a common phenomenon: — is it any wonder that, in a world such as this, life becomes unliveable, a veritable nightmare, and men are compelled either to rise in revolt to assert their manhood, or to resort to fawning obsequiousness and cringing cowardice, in order to survive?

Part III
Will We Make or Mar

(First published in *ABBLA* No.5, 1964)

Editorial

One year has rolled round since *ABBLA* came into being. In the very first number, in February 1963, an appeal went out entreating us to bear a hand in this undertaking, an enterprise wide in scope and deep in merit. And in answer to this call, we launched out with zest into diverse fields — history, ethnology, literature, religion, economics, education, language, the fine arts. It was freest prospection in different domains according to the interest and the specialisation of each. But all this activity was animated by the one purpose that was defined, in the first issue, by Bernard Fonlon namely, “to serve but culture and serve it alone, and serve it impartially, and serve it scientifically.”

Today, we feel the need to take our bearings. Having lived face to face, for one year, with the facts about our country, we are now in a position to make a precise appraisal of its problems. And God knows that they are vast and complex. We are more conscious now of the concrete difficulties which impede this enterprise of striving to salvage what can still be salvaged from our disparate, disintegrating, fast-disappearing past; we are more conscious still of the foreign pressures which are bringing their influence to bear on our efforts to adapt ourselves to the modern world.

That is why we have thought it wise to attempt a first, general analysis of the forces that have met in this country and of the principles that should guide cultural reconstruction in Cameroon. There you have the whole problem of integration.

Our first preoccupation, therefore, is to define our culture in order to shed light on the exact understanding that we have of ourselves and of the world. But this is not enough.

For we must further invest this culture with a purpose, must give it direction, must endow it with meaning, must reconstruct its scale of values with reference to the African whose dignity we hope to see en-thereby. After all, culture is meant for man and we must decide what type of society we desire to create in this country. That is why every intellectual must, from time to time, pause and ponder over his activity and ask himself the simple and eternal questions of the *Homo sapiens*: “Whence are we? What are we?”

Whither are we tending?”

And, for Africa, now is the time to find the answers, now the time to make the urgent choice; for now has come the indispensable moment, for us, to “take up again,” as Césaire has put it, “the initiative of her destiny”; in a word, the time has come for us to do a work worthy of the free.

We call, therefore, upon the Cameroon intelligentsia, at home and abroad, for whom this review was created, to collaborate with us, to meditate with us upon the following words of Frantz Fanon and to help us to draw from them the conclusions they hold for our country:

The under-privileged, he wrote, stands today against Europe like a colossal mass whose chief concern should be to strive to solve those problems for which Europe has not been able to find the answers.

Therefore, comrades, we should not pay tribute to Europe by creating States, institutions and societies which draw inspiration from her.

Humanity expects from us something other than this sort of imitation which turns us to ridicule.

If all we intend to do is to transform Africa into a new Europe, why, then let us hand over the destinies of our countries to Europeans. They would take care of that better than the best of us.

But if we want to make humanity advance, even by so much as a notch, if we intend to raise it to a height other than that to which Europe is pointing, then we should invent it, then we should find it.

For Europe, for ourselves, and for humanity, comrades, it is imperative, for us, to turn over a new leaf, to elaborate a new thought, to endeavour to bring forth a new man and set him on his feet.

*If we could first know where we are,
and whither we are fending,
we could better judge
what to do,
and how to do it.*
(Abraham Lincoln)⁹

This review has now completed one year of existence. And, apart from the general intention to promote culture in Cameroon, it has espoused, up to this, no definite orientation, no well delineated policy. But we have not been unmindful of the need for such a guiding line for a periodical of this kind; we have given careful thought to this all along, only we deemed it wiser to hasten slowly, to hasten surely.

At length, we have come to the conclusion that Abbia, being a cultural review, a Cameroon cultural review, should adopt as central policy whatever happens to be the most important problem in Cameroon cultural progress at any given period.

At the Meeting of the Waters

A fact at once crucial and historic about our country, at present, is that, today, three cultural currents are met in Cameroon: the African mainstream — the culture of the land, the culture of the masses; and the French and British tributaries — the cultures of the westernised few.

Now, at this juncture, the question that rises uppermost in our minds is this: What shall we do with these, where do we go from here?

A look at each of these cultures in turn may help to furnish an answer to this question.

Although the African way of life is the culture of the many, and although all of us, however up-rooted we may be, share in it to a certain extent, the fact remains that, the African tradition, today, is largely a dormant culture, because it is not the vehicle and instrument of modern progress; and, as we know, it is the power to promote scientific thought and technical know-how

⁹ The speech, "A House Divided Against Itself Cannot Stand," made at Springfield, Illinois, on June 16, 1858, on the occasion of Lincoln's nomination to the United States Senate.

that endows a culture with dynamism.

Furthermore, Cultural Initiative (and by cultural initiative I mean the right or authority to introduce new measures or new courses of action in matters cultural) does not rest with the unlettered masses that live according to the ancient ways. This initiative, this authority lies exclusively in the hands of the westernised few. Without this power, no man or group can initiate cultural policy or bring significant influence to bear on cultural progress. Here, it may be observed, in passing, that one of the gravest injuries that colonialism inflicted on African culture was that it wrested this initiative from the hands of the African and thus seriously impaired our cultural continuum. For, from the position of initiator in his own welfare, the African was reduced even below the level of participant and became, in affairs touching his intimate self, a mere passive on-looker. It was only with the coming of independence that Cultural Initiative returned, or seemed to have returned, into African hands.

There is also this fact that, from the moment that colonialism set foot on African soil, the African way of life has been locked in a life and death struggle with European influence; and it looks almost certain that, from this unequal warfare, European culture will emerge the winner. Indeed, victory for the Whiteman's way of life seems all the more assured as the African himself, through a sense of shame born of a purposely inculcated inferiority complex, has taken an active part in spurning and demolishing the legacy of his fathers.

On the contrary, though the culture of the few, European culture is the culture of government, the culture of science and technology, the culture of commerce and industry, the culture of the schools and the churches, in a word, the culture of those persons and institutions in whose grasp Cultural Initiative is solidly entrenched. For the administration and the institutions I have enumerated constitute the brain and the nerve centres, the heart and the blood vessels of the body politic. In other words, European culture among us is a force charged with dynamism and resilience, an imperative for our political, economic, social and cultural advancement.

However, the two specimens of this culture that are met in our country today are not of equal strength. The Anglo-Saxon is weaker, and, this, for obvious reasons.

It was through West Cameroon that British influence came into the present set-up; but in this federation, West Cameroon occupies a position that is inferior geographically, inferior demographically, inferior politically,

inferior in resources. The numerical, territorial, and economic inferiority of West Cameroon is a self-evident fact, but the political side of it may need an explanation.

This federation came into being with the union of two states, one (the Cameroon Republic) already endowed with external sovereignty and the other (Southern Cameroons) scarcely enjoying internal self-government. There could be, therefore, no bargaining between them as between equals; for, at the conference table, Southern Cameroons could not speak with that dignity, that authority that is the prerogative, today, of even tiny Zanzibar.

The result of this many-sided inequality is that, in this federation, that initiative of which I spoke above, that power to introduce policy, to shape the course of events in things political, economic, social and cultural, lies, to all intents and purposes, entirely in the hands of East Cameroonians.

In three years of unification, sundry uses and institutions, thanks to articles five and six of the federal constitution, have now come from the East into the West. Furthermore, in West Cameroon, they now drive on the right, the franc has replaced sterling as legal tender, the school year has now been stream-lined to fit that of the East and the scientific Metric System has now replaced the unwieldy British measures.

But I have searched in vain for one such use or institution brought into the East through West Cameroon. Outside its own federate frontiers, the influence of West Cameroon is practically nil.

By the very nature of things and by the force of circumstances, therefore, the tide is running hard against Anglo-Saxon influence in the Federal Republic of Cameroon. Thus, this much is clear that, if we leave things to chance, if the will and the positive choice of our leaders do not intervene, there is hardly any hope of worthy British uses and institutions surviving in our cultural corpus.

The influence of the French, on the contrary, thanks to their colonial cultural policy, thanks to their chummy attitude to the blacks, thanks to their vast economic interests, thanks to their numerous physical presence, is very strong — and waxing stronger.

Furthermore, the French, in colonial days, denied that there was anything of sterling worth in the African way of life and rejected the Blackman's values as so much savagery. The only way to save the African culturally was to wash his brain clean of his primitive barbarism and make him French as thoroughly as possible.

That was the famous policy that has gone down in colonial history as

Assimilation. Thus it is that the African elite, in the former French colonies, especially those of them who spent years in France and went through institutes of higher learning there, underwent a cultural grilling and indoctrination of which English speaking Africans have no idea. The thoroughness of this process was all the more assured as most of these young men and women left for France at a very tender age, often straight from the primary school. A process which furnished a well-fashioned *evolve* cut to strict Cartesian shape, but, more often than not, with trauma in his soul.

The result, for this country, is that the East Cameroon intellectual in whose hands lie nine-tenths of the cultural responsibility in this federation, is virtually a French man. And with all the goodwill in the word, with all the effort at intellectual honesty, he will act and react as a French man.

The massive evidence, therefore, is that, in East Cameroon, the influence of the French, already overwhelming, is tremendously reinforced and consolidated by the Cameroonians themselves.

Therefore, unless the East Cameroon leader and intellectual, in whose hands cultural initiative lies, is prepared to share this authority with his brother from West of the Mungo, unless he is prepared to make the giant effort necessary to break loose from the strait-jacket of his French education, unless he will show proof of intellectual probity and admit candidly that there are things in the Anglo-Saxon way of life that can do this country good, there is little chance of survival, neither for English influence, nor even for African values in the Federal Republic of Cameroon.

With African culture moribund, with John Bullism weak and in danger of being smothered, we will all be French in two generations or three!

One of Four Possibilities

Where two or more cultures meet, as they have done in Cameroon, one of four possible policies can be adopted with regard to their future development.

Firstly, within the framework of a political union more or less loose, each culture is allowed to live its own life and pursue an autonomous destiny. This is most likely to happen where the two cultures are of equal strength or where each cultural community is ferociously bent on defending its own way of life, regardless of the intrinsic worth of that way of life. Switzerland, Belgium, India and Canada are notable examples.

The next possibility is where the weight of one of the cultures is so heavy

that it smothers the life out of the rest, or where the other cultural partners are not particularly keen on preserving their own traditions. An example of this is the hegemony of Anglo-Saxonism in the United States where immigrant communities have but one burning ambition, to shed their former selves and become American, out and out; where the Negro, in his ardour for complete Americanisation, asks with disdain: *What is Africa to me?*¹⁰

A third possible policy is to refrain from choosing any predetermined mould into which to force these cultures, but to leave them alone to sort themselves out at haphazard, that is, without the guidance of knowledge and principle.

The last possibility is where the intrinsic worth of each of the cultures is admitted and it is decided to examine their constituent elements carefully in order to use the best of them to build up a new, rich, harmonised and dynamic system: new, because it is a *tertium quid* better than its antecedents; rich, because of its diversity; harmonised, because of its unity; dynamic, because of its power to foster creative thought and concrete cultural achievement.

Four roads, therefore, lie open before us: independent development, elimination of the weak by the strong, laissez-faire, and scientific integration. Which do we choose for Cameroon?

Separate development is to be excluded because to choose it would be to reject the goal that the Cameroon people have set for themselves, to wit, national unity; and a nation, as I pointed out in the first issue of this review, is essentially a unit of thought and feeling; and this it can only be, thanks to its culture. Furthermore, power in the new political outfit is so concentrated in the hands of the federal authorities that separate development, if it is to proceed without friction, will call for a revision of the Constitution.

That the dominant culture should smother out the dormant, is to be rejected out of hand; for that would mean to cast away a peerless opportunity for cultural enrichment: each of these three cultures has something to offer us, something of intrinsic beauty that the others cannot give. To allow one culture to oust the rest would be to mar an historic chance, to wreck the noble mission that Cameroon has been called upon to fulfil in the name of all Africa. When President Ahidjo says that this country is a pilot state, he is not bragging, nor is he using a phrase void of meaning. It is precisely the historic opportunity to effect an integration of these three cultures that has invested

¹⁰ Countee Cullen: *Heritage* (poem).

Cameroon with the singular, enviable mission to pilot the rest of Africa into continental unity. It would be a curious lack of a sense of history to be indifferent to an enterprise of these dimensions.

Laissez-faire also merits outright rejection; for given the passiveness of African culture and the impotence of Anglo-Saxon influence, on the one hand, and the ascendancy of the French on the other, laissez-faire can have but one outcome: Complete Frenchification.

There is only one road left, the only one that is right, namely, a carefully thought-out integration of the best elements from the three cultures.

In this affair, the Cameroon Bilingual Cultural Review is not neutral. It cannot be neutral. It has taken its stand for Cultural Integration in Cameroon.

The Challenge

Before the independence of Ghana, the prevalent propaganda was that Africans were innately unfit to govern themselves. Thus it is to the lasting credit of the Ghanaians to have seen, right from the start, the overwhelming importance of their independence not only to themselves but to all Africa, and, indeed, to the entire Negro race: to fail was completely out of the question; they had no choice but to succeed; else, they would betray a whole continent, a whole race, and give occasion to the enemies of the black man's freedom to dance for very joy.

As the African revolution gathered strength and swept along irresistibly, it began to dawn upon thinking African leaders that independence for a balkanised Africa was little better than the colonial yoke; and so the idea of African unity began to gain speedy ground. Struck with terror at the prospect of the might of a United Africa, the Blackman's enemies began whispering into influential African ears that such unity was unrealistic, impossible, utopian. Looking round, they saw something which they believed they could exploit with devastating effect to wreck all hopes for the achievement of African oneness: they began to inculcate the idea that Africans cast, respectively, in the French and in the English moulds were so radically different that all their efforts to come together were, *a priori*, doomed to failure.

Just as Ghana's independence exploded the first myth and blazed the trail of freedom for the rest of Africa, Cameroon reunification has a clear mission to demolish the second and lead the way to African unity. The overwhelming

importance of this role cannot be over-stressed: we have no choice but to succeed; to fail would be to let down a whole continent, to let down a whole race.

Furthermore, this Cameroon experiment, already so wide in scope, has a third, more essential dimension in depth. For, as I observed earlier, it seems as if, in the unequal struggle with the Whiteman's ways, African culture, long become languid, is doomed to be worsted, doomed to be ground underneath as by a massive roller.

With this opportunity for cultural integration in Cameroon, we have an historic chance to vindicate the resilience and the vitality of African culture, to show that, though dormant, it is not dead, that, though passive in appearance, it possesses, notwithstanding, hidden springs of resistance, and that, with renewal, it is destined to play an irreplaceable role in the modern Africa.

However, in what does this mission consist essentially?

I have said before that the union of a people is not complete until they have forged for themselves a soul, that principle of life and continuity, that unity of thought and feeling that only a common culture can give. And the only way for Africa to acquire this principle is to create a new culture thoughtfully, methodically, diligently, from those which are met on the continent today.

Thus, if we fulfil this mission with intelligence and devotion and energy, the culture which we forge for ourselves here will be, at least, the nucleus of an all-African culture, since the main cultural forces on the African continent are the same that are met today in Cameroon.

The Essential Operations

As I have said before, the final end of our striving in this enterprise is to create a new, rich, harmonised and dynamic culture from all that is best in those we have inherited. To arrive at this, three operations will be necessary: firstly, a keen-sighted, objective, scientific examination of the constituent elements of the cultures concerned, next, a logical, dispassionate, decisive choice; and lastly, a judicious, energetic carrying into effect of that choice.

But how shall that which is best be known; what acid test shall reveal its worth?

First, and in general, an element to be chosen must be true and good and beautiful in itself; secondly, it must be that which among others as true, as

good and as beautiful as itself, best satisfies a specific need felt by us, a specific void in our cultural life.

But if this noble enterprise is to be made, not marred, we must follow a clearly delineated policy, we must respect definite rules and principles, which rules and principles call for specific methods and procedures.

This Culture must be African

The first principle, of which we must never lose sight, is that this culture, to be created from elements so different in their origin, must be African in its essence: the soil from which it springs, from which it draws its nourishment, must be African; African must be the stem into which the Franco-British borrowings should be grafted so that the sap that runs through the organism, from the root to the flower, and gives life and unity to the whole, should be African.

If this is to be, two things are absolutely necessary: firstly, African values should be studied anew, should be purified, rehabilitated and charged with new dynamism; secondly, it is of primordial importance that this African renewal and the examination and choice of the foreign elements to be grafted thereon should be done by Africans.

Any institution, however excellent, foreign in initiative and creation, offered to us ready-made on a platter of gold can in no way be said to be African. If such institutions multiplied among us, they would only serve to perpetuate the myth that Africans are overgrown children.

The Practical Application

As a general rule, therefore, whenever there is question of the creation or the adoption and adaptation of an institution or a use of national cultural importance, no foreign intervention should be called in until African brains have exhausted themselves on the problem.

In its development, from the state of idea to that of thing, a policy normally passes through the following stages: first, someone conceives it, next it is examined, deliberated upon, elaborated, then it is adopted and finally applied.

At the stages of conception, deliberation and choice, Africans must never call for help until it is certain, beyond doubt that the problem is above their capacity. Lack of trained personnel makes it absolutely necessary for us to

rely on the stranger. Yet, except it cannot be helped, let him be called in only at the stage of application or execution; and, even then, his work should be subject to careful superintendence.

As a rule, whenever it is necessary, at any stage, to use the foreigner's help, it must be certain that he is really a specialist in that specific field. Furthermore, and this is of supreme importance, he must be a man whose word, whose pledge, is absolutely inviolate, a man whose sincerity is transparent.

We must likewise bear in mind that the creation of a culture or the building of a nation is also a process in self-education: we learn to do by doing. That is the only way to consolidate our manhood and vindicate our maturity. We shall never cure ourselves of that cultural alienation of which we are the victims, we shall never achieve anything of sterling worth, we shall never make Africa African, if we bury our own talent, if we run to the stranger, at every turn, before we have even tried.

The Principle of Equal Participation

As I have said before, the inequality of East and West Cameroon in size, in men, in resources and in power is a self-evident fact.

Therefore, the weakness of West Cameroon and of Anglo-Saxon influence in this federation, consequent on this multiform inferiority, is a perfectly natural outcome. It would therefore be naive to fret against the fact. And yet, a man, as a man, does not lose his fights because he is diminutive in stature or because he is a valetudinarian. The two federated states of this federation, as federated states are on the same footing of equality. Besides, in its very first article, our constitution makes English and French official languages, without qualification. In fact, if the need arose to decide which of these two cultures has the upper hand, it would be completely misleading to judge them in the Cameroon context; the question must be settled by ascertaining the extent and the force of their respective influences in Africa and in the world. But that is beside the question. The point to establish and ram down is that, in this federation, these two cultures stand on the same footing of equality. In fact, it is the difference in culture that justifies the separate existence of the two states. Without this difference, there would have been no excuse, whatsoever, for a country as small as ours to saddle itself with the unwieldy burden of three parliaments and three governments.

Each of these two influences, therefore, must be given an equal chance

to participate effectively in the cultural development of this country.

The Practical Implications

But the inequalities of West Cameroon, as we have seen, are so many and so overwhelming that, in fact, they have tended to crowd out or drown the few points of equality. There is need, therefore, for a positive policy, for a conscious effort, for eternal vigilance, against this tendency.

As a practical rule, therefore, when there is question of making a decision of great cultural moment, when there is question of setting up an institution, of adopting a use of far-reaching, cultural importance, West Cameroon, through its experts, should be given an equal, real, and effective opportunity to make a contribution.

I said earlier that, politically, West Cameroon entered this federation, as an unequal partner. But those who drew up our constitution showed proof of sound wisdom by making sure that West Cameroon should have an equal voice in the passing of the laws of this land; making provision in article 17 that *federal laws shall be adopted by a simple majority of deputies*, they went on to lay down, in the succeeding article, that, when a second reading is necessary, *the law shall be adopted only if the majority specified in the preceding article comprises a majority of votes of the deputies of each of the federated states*.

And yet when I talk of an equal opportunity for initiative and participation in this country's cultural development, I do not intend anything as rigid and legal as this constitutional provision. What then do I mean?

A Concrete Illustration

A country's university, especially where there is only one, is the brains of the nation, the power-house of its intellectual life, the supplier of its skills, the moulder of its leadership, the seat of its culture. A country's university, therefore, is its highest cultural institution.

For a Cameroon university today to be really national, it must satisfy two categorical imperatives: First it must, in the main, be the creation, the brain-child, of Cameroonians themselves; secondly, it must reflect the nature that our country has assumed in this history-making epoch of its existence, to wit, it must be, not only basically African, but also a university where French and Anglo-Saxon influences meet to blend.

But if these two exigencies have to be met genuinely, West

Cameroonians must be given a real and equal chance to make an effective contribution in bringing this institution into being and in bearing it through from its conception, its elaboration and its establishment to its full bloom.

To deny them this right (for a right it is, and in no way a favour –let that be clearly borne in mind) would be a gravest omission. If we want therefore, that the emerging Cameroon culture should faithfully represent the present nature of our country, if we wish to accomplish, with insight and method and devotion and dynamism, the African mission that has devolved upon us, if we wish that this country should be the pilot African state in fact as in name, then Cameroon should resolve to exploit its bicultural talent and experience to the full, whenever there is question of the adoption and the adaptation of an important cultural use or the creation of institutions of primordial cultural worth – like the reorganisation of our law and our judiciary, our education system, our public services, the creation of a military tradition, the setting up of our institutions of higher learning.

Else, the high purpose that we claim to have set for ourselves, the noble mission that has fallen to our lot will be marred, not made, and perhaps marred beyond mending.

To avert this failure, it will be imperative, not only that East Cameroonians should share cultural initiative and authority with their brothers from West of the Mungo; it will be equally necessary that West Cameroonians themselves should become more conscious of the natural inequalities and disabilities under which they labour in this set-up, and strive to make up by quality what they lack in quantity.

There is no future for their identity in this federation, if they are asleep to this situation, if they are not prepared, as the expression is, to put their best foot foremost.

But as the intelligentsia, whose role is of the first importance in this enterprise, possess but skill without authority, they will not be able to give their best, if the politicians persist in their neglect to use them judiciously, if they persist in their failure to acknowledge the elementary principle that political authority, by itself alone, cannot be equated with technical know-how.

I must make the point, therefore, and drive it home that, in this matter, a very heavy responsibility lies on the shoulders of the West Cameroon leadership.

The political authorities in this country, as a whole, have the duty to seek out the country's talent, to appraise it, to give urgent and ample opportunity

for its formation where it is deficient and to go every length in seeing to it that each one is employed where he is calculated to be most effective and productive, that is, at the job to which he is destined by his specialised training.

But experience, especially in West Cameroon, warns that this national mission may be ruined beyond the point of no return, unless the party in power is prepared to declare a political moratorium, to banish factional bitterness and muster every hand to the task of national reconstruction.

The Primordial Counterpart

It is obvious that we of the present generation whose days are running out shall not be there to enjoy the bloom of this harmonized culture whose seeds we are now striving to sow. We plant for posterity.

For, although it is its external expressions like tools and machines, styles of shelter, sculpture and painting, music and literature, political institutions, judicial systems, forms of worship that are most in evidence, culture is essentially something internal, something of the mind and heart; for all these things are but the embodiment of thought and faith and feeling.

In creating and developing culture, therefore, the essential operation is that which is carried on within; if culture dies in man, if thought and skill and feeling and belief are not transmitted by one generation to another, the concrete counterparts of civilisation would disappear for ever from the face of the earth.

All this goes to emphasize the overwhelming importance of education as a cultural operation: it makes culture a living force, ensures its continuity, enhances its chances of renewal and enables it to fructify.

There are two things in education: the first is the matter or content, that is, the whole gamut of human learning; the second is the form – the language in which that content is couched for transmission. In so far as the role of education in the process of cultural integration is concerned, certain fundamental principles need to be laid down both with regard to matter and to form.

The first of these is that, at the initial stages, at the base, that is, the content of African education should be African.

This is no morbid chauvinism, no xenophobia: it is merely respect for an historical, psychological and pedagogical necessity.

For what other cultural patrimony does a community possess to hand

down to posterity than the corpus of the knowledge, the principles and the arts it has garnered and created, by itself, for itself, through the ages, in the past? How else can such a community preserve its identity, in changing time, except by moulding its posterity in its own image and likeness and by breathing into that posterity the breath of its own life? And with what else can this community accomplish this historical task except with its culture?

Secondly, a principle at once elementary and cardinal in intellectual formation is to proceed from the known to the unknown. The first task of the teacher is to furnish the child with names for the images and the ideas thrown upon the screen of his mind by the world and the motion he observes about him; and next, thanks to analogy, to make him conceive that which is unseen from that which is seen.

If we begin with things completely removed from the child's experience, the effort he expends to imagine what those things might be could be such as to do lasting harm to the tender learning faculty.

There are schools in this country where the text books used for teaching infants, even in the very first classes, are those intended for children in France. Some may say that this is due to lack of funds and experts to prepare more suitable manuals. For my part, I do not think that is so; for, in certain circles in this country, even among Africans, the idea is still alive that, if it is not French, it is no use.

This practice continuing after independence is not only an anachronism but a surprising contempt for elementary principles in educational psychology.

And yet the schools which sin most against this law are those which enjoy the highest prestige around here; for it would appear that they are frequented mostly by the children of the whites and by those of the rising Cameroon bourgeoisie.

With regard to the form of education, since the child comes to school already equipped with knowledge of his environment and with the language in which that knowledge finds expression, the normal principle should be that the first language of instruction should be the indigenous language; for learning in it would mean, not the acquisition of new knowledge, but the recognition, in print, of that which is already well in the possession of mind and tongue. Thus the earliest attempts at learning to read would not be so arduous a task. But since the native language is not the language of further instruction, this operation should not last unduly long. Nevertheless, provision should be made, in our education system, to enable those who are

specially interested to pursue the study of African languages and linguistics right through school and college.

It is, in my considered opinion, therefore, that where a language, like Fulani, for instance, or Duala or Bulu or Ewondo, is spoken by communities considerably large, and where such a language has the added advantage of having already been reduced to writing, it should be taught in the primary schools, among its speakers, at least for the first two years.

I am of the opinion also that, in such areas, adult education would be immensely more effective, if it were carried on in the native language.

Finally, as I have argued extensively elsewhere, seeing the role that French and English have come to play in our national life, seeing their importance in Africa and in the world, and seeing the incontestable fact that languages are best learnt in childhood, the teaching of both English and French in this country, should be begun in the primary school.

The idea is growing upon me that this bilingual programme would be tremendously fostered, if all school readers and manuals, throughout the country, East and West, were given exactly the same content, the language only differing. Thus, if this bilingual project were tried out in an East Cameroon primary school, let us say, French could be started one year ahead of English; the following year, when English is introduced, the children would get a pleasant surprise to find that they are using the same text book as the year before only in a different language. I am sure the learning would be definitely less arduous.

This bilingual text book scheme could be carefully brought forward, from year to year, until, one day, it covers our whole education system — why not? — from the primary school to the university.

I would earnestly suggest that a start be made in primary school bilingualism, at least, in a few carefully selected schools, to see how it works.

It has proved successful elsewhere — I wonder, why not here?

Dangers — from Without

At this stage in our development, the assistance of the stranger is a dire necessity; and, therefore, any attitude, on our part, that smacks of xenophobia would be the sheerest folly.

Yet, so self-centred is man that there is always an element of personal interest even where there is the undoubted will to live for others' good. How much more, therefore, where there is no determined effort to purify motives!

It should be, thus, no matter for surprise that foreigners serving among us should be prone to seek their country's interest as naturally as water seeks its own level.

There is no such thing as unalloyed altruism.

Therefore, as there is no guarantee that the interest of their country would coincide with ours, it is not ingratitude but the merest prudence to keep a watchful eye on our foreign helpers.

It is, thus, truly meet and just, right and salutary to pause and ask ourselves what is likely to be the attitude of our principal helpers, the French and the Anglo-Saxons, to this enterprise of cultural integration in Cameroon.

This attitude, in either case, can be forecast from two indications: firstly, their past attitude to Africa, to Africans and to things African; secondly, their present activities in other places where prevailing conditions are similar to ours. With facts on these to judge by, the attitude of our helpers can be predicted with a fair amount of accuracy.

First the French. In their colonial theory and practice, the French flatly rejected the existence of any African culture worthy of the name and logically held, as a consequence, that the only means for a black man to be saved, culturally, was to become a Frenchman. Hence the celebrated policy of assimilation.

A classic example of this policy was the inveterate hostility of the French towards African languages. In West Africa, with its confusion of tongues, it would have been understandable, even normal, for the colonial power to brush aside the Babel and impose its own language in the interests of unity and orderly administration.

But what about Malagasy? What about Arabic?

Everybody knows, for instance, that, if you count the great cultural languages of the world and count Arabic out, your list is not complete. Not only does this language enshrine one of the major religions of the world; it was also through it, thanks to Arabic philosophers like Avicenna and Averroes, that Greek philosophy was saved for the West in the confusion that followed the barbarian invasions of the Roman Empire. And yet this tremendous prestige did not save Arabic from the French cultural onslaught.

I have beside me here a document¹¹ giving facts and figures about a veritable hundred year's war unleashed and waged by the French against Arabic culture in Algeria, from early in the eighteen thirties to the dawn of

¹¹ L'Arabisation culturelle de l'Algérie, par Vincent Monteil: *Preuves*, Janvier 1964.

this present decade. The French generals who conquered Algeria reported that there were two schools in every village and that practically every Arab, at the time, could read and write. Primary instruction was given in the mosques, secondary instruction in institutions called the zaouias and higher education in the medersas. But the French banished Arabic from the schools, and these institutions were relentlessly harried, driven underground and ruthlessly suppressed. And side by side with this persecution went the ardent crusade to implant French culture.

Not only were the French hostile towards African culture, but they showed great disrelish for other cultural influences intruding into their preserves. I remember, in the nineteen fifties, back in colonial days, there were on the staff of Ibadan University, not only Englishmen and Nigerians, but also Germans, Americans, Scandinavians; in fact, at one time, the head of the department of English was a Dane. This could hardly have happened, in such an institution, in a French-governed territory. Even after independence, in former French colonies, one still notices the same irritation against the inroad of other influences, the same determination to preserve the French cultural hegemony. For all the ballyhoo about the bilingual university of Cameroon, you can take it for granted that it will be a French university, pure and simple, if the Cameroon authorities do not take this institution well in hand.

French imperialism, especially in things cultural and economic, is of the exclusive, jealous type.

Frankly speaking, therefore, I do not expect any Frenchman to glow with enthusiasm at the prospect of cultural integration in Cameroon; rather, it would be more in line with his bent and with his past to resent the Anglo-Saxons, and even the West Cameroonians, here, as intruders. I expect him to strain every nerve to foil our national enterprise and to use his overwhelming ascendancy in this country to Frenchify us all.

If this attitude, on the part of the French, is motivated by fear for the survival of their culture in Cameroon, they are mistaken. For cultural integration, in this country, is no threat, whatsoever, against French influence. Rather it is a clarion witness to the eminent role that France is called upon to share in a world where her influence is far-flung and deep, a world where monopolistic jealousy is doomed, where interdependence, where co-operation among nations is daily becoming an absolute necessity.

Already the metric system is law throughout this land. And we are glad to have it! In every secondary school West of the Mungo, pupils are now daily

bending over their French lessons. And I can personally assure the French that, were it left to me, I would have the very kids in the primary schools doing in like manner.

Indeed! Far from dwindling, French influence in Cameroon is spreading.

Let the French be assured therefore. Let them shed their former narrowness. Let them exorcise their minds clean of any dog-in-the-manger spirit. And learn to share.

They must learn to share, because as surely as they strain to have it all alone, thus so surely will they provoke bitterness and resentment against their presence here. If they do not wish to ruin, in this fashion, their splendid chance for doing good, they should be wise in time, and take heed.

What has begun in Cameroon, perhaps, may be destined, like the African revolution, to swell into a continental movement against which not even the gates of hell shall prevail.

To have helped in its making will redound to their deathless merit; to have striven to mar it — to their limitless discredit.

Throughout this essay, I have purposely avoided speaking of the British and have preferred the more general term of Anglo-Saxon in order to include the Americans. In fact, it is only of the Americans that I intend to speak; for although the Anglo-Saxon uses and institutions that we have inherited are British, the British themselves, to their lasting credit, on our quitting the Commonwealth, decided to pack out; and, today, their more wealthy, more vigorous and more redoubtable cousins are swarming in, from across the Atlantic, to take their place.

And, thus, any real danger that may threaten cultural integration in Cameroon from the Anglo-Saxon side must stem, in the main, from the Americans.

I have said above that the possible attitude of our foreign helpers to this our national enterprise can be forecast firstly, from their past attitude to Africans and secondly, from present activities in other places where the conditions prevalent are the same as here.

One can say at once that, descried from this double standpoint, the coming of the Americans, to the truly nationalist African, is calculated to arouse more of fear than hope. It is imperative, therefore, to remind the Americans, without mincing words, that, if they want their influence here to be at once effective and salutary, if they desire to win, in return, the thanks of the African, they must do three things: they must allay existing bitterness, they must dissipate suspicion; they must hands off and let this country, let

Africa, go her destined road.

What do I mean, they must assuage bitterness? I say this precisely because any wakeful African who contemplates the attitude of the American towards the Blackman, during the past four hundred years, cannot help feeling bitter. For there is not a country in the world where people of African descent have seen so much trouble as in the United States. Over this fact there is no dispute. We know of slavery, we know of the contempt, the mockery, the insolence, the humiliations, the indignities, we know of all the gratuitous wickedness of which the Blackman has been the victim, at the hands of the white American.

And yet American prosperity was literally watered by the sweat and the tears and the blood of the Negro.

Large numbers of American Negroes, desperate in this tribulation, reject their African origin. Notwithstanding, the truth still remains that whatever indignity is heaped upon them there, is, ipso facto, heaped upon us here.

If American influence among us is to be effective and salutary, they must follow up vigorously the initiative of the late President Kennedy and put this record right. Nothing short of complete first class citizenship for the Negro will do. Else, as we contemplate the past and hear the echoes that reach us from across the Atlantic, anti-Americanism will grow, in spite of all the dollars.

The second thing, I said, which the Americans must do, to render their influence healthy, is to dissipate suspicion. What I mean exactly will be seen from the following illustration.

The Vietnamese crisis which brought down Ngo Dinh Diem and cost him his life is a recent memory. We heard unearthly accounts of bonzes, men and women, making public holocausts of themselves to register a protest against the Dien regime. Diem countered by sending troops to seize the monks and put their temples to the sack. The world's attention was focused on the Saigon drama. From several quarters, voices rose in protest against Diem's heartless obstinacy. And the White House joined in the general indignation.

And thus it takes one's breath completely away to read of some of the things that the Americans did during that crisis.

For, Tribune, the British Labour Party's independent weekly, reports that the troops who raided the pagodas in Saigon were creatures of the CIA and that the colonel in charge of Ngo Dinh Nhu's secret police and armed thugs was receiving from this American Government outfit as much as £90,000 a

month! One arm of the Government financing what another arm of the same Government was denouncing.¹²

When you read things like these, and when, into the bargain, you recall the Bay of Pigs, you are not surprised at the frenzied anti-Americanism that has seized Ghana recently. There is danger that this fever, instead of abating, may rise higher still and spread farther afield.

The urgency of the need to allay anti-American bitterness and suspicion among wakeful Africans cannot be laughed away. For the growing sinister image that names like the CIA and the Pentagon are evoking nowadays can only serve to render more hideous the stigma on the name of the U. S. A.

Thanks to the Peace Corps of lamented President Kennedy, more and more American youths are doing, in our schools and colleges, a work that deserves to be saluted; but a work whose merit their own very country can mar. I have been a personal witness of the painful embarrassment that these generous youths can undergo to hear themselves roundly denounced in sections of the African press as tools of the CIA and the Pentagon.

There are two reasons why the Americans embark on such activities. The first is their determination to allow the Russian Bear no foot-hold, whatsoever, in any corner of the world, and to drive him back into his Siberian fastnesses! For, two hates sear the history of America: the older is that for the Blackman; the second is that for Socialism.

The other reason why the Americans do these things is a natural concomitant of the first: having ousted socialism, they would use their measureless wealth to lay hold on the whole resources of the world, and thus keep within their grasp the entire human race. For it is iron logic that whoever owns your land will make your laws and control your destinies and your lives.

There is hardly any major commercial, industrial or mining concern in Central America, in South America, in the Caribbean, in Europe, in the Near East, in the Far East, in which the Americans have not got a controlling hand. In the New World especially, they own almost everything, everywhere. That is why some of the South American countries today, are seething with resentment and rising unrest. That is what creates the Castros. It should be no cause for wonder, then, that the possibility of a socialist world should be such a nightmare to the Americans. Here in Africa, thanks to our misery, they are gaining a sure and steady foothold; they have a special eye on such

¹² *Tribune*, September 13, 1963, page 12.

choice morsels as the Congo.

Power over the world's resources and its people — this is the grand American objective for which, to them, any means, at all, are justified.

Thus we have all been witnesses of the strange phenomenon where proclaiming themselves the champions of freedom and democracy, the Americans have perpetrated, at home, some of the most illiberal things and have supported, abroad, some of the most rotten, undemocratic and detested regimes. Obviously, the more corrupt a government is, the readier will it be to prostitute itself and hand over its people's meagre interests to the monied stranger.

Here in Africa, where we do not have the private capital that enabled the western world to effect its industrial revolution, it is abundantly clear that, if the little we possess is to remain in our hands and be developed for our good, if the freedom we have won is to be genuine even to a restricted degree, if the disinherited African masses are to be shielded from the exploitation of the fat foreign monopolies, the African State, united at a continental level, must become the owner, the producer, the controller and the dispenser of the common wealth.

Furthermore, in the last analysis, cultural integration, for us, will mean the merging of the modern technical civilisation with the traditional African way of life.

But the essential characteristic of life in an authentic African community is solidarity. In fact, even sculpture, art, music and literature in traditional Africa have a primordially communal purpose. Solidarity, therefore, is the very soul of African culture. For my part, I do not see any other modern framework, in which that spirit can survive, than socialism. For us, this way of life is not only a political and economic must; it is also a cultural necessity. Thus, for us, the choice of a major economic orientation will also be a major cultural option.

But, from what we have seen, it is certain that any African government which opts for socialism will have the wrath of America to reckon with.

Americans, today, are called upon to play a growing part in fostering cultural progress in Africa. I have said that if their contribution is to be healthy and effective, they must allay resentment and assuage suspicion in the hearts and minds of those whom they have come to help.

It is equally important that they should desist from all attempts to force Africa along a channel of their own choice. This continent has its destined way to go and, from the very nature of things, one thing is clear, at least to

me, that it shall not be the American Way.

There are those who, reading what I have written in these passages, will jump to the conclusion that I am against the French and the Americans. That is beside the point. Concerning the things I have said on this head, the only relevant question that can be asked is the simple one that the presiding high priest put to Saint Stephen, when this latter was hauled by the Jews before the San-hedrin: Are these charges true?¹³

Dangers from Within

A couple of adders crawling in the undergrowth about a person's dwelling are far less dangerous to his health than the bacilli swimming merrily in his blood.

Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, was wont to say that the Blackman is the Blackman's greatest enemy. And thus it is true to assert that the deadliest dangers to cultural integration in Cameroon will be internal, not external, will be those that stem from the Cameroonians themselves. No outside forces however fierce can prevail against us, if we have lucid knowledge of what we are about, if we are firmly convinced about the urgent need for it, and are resolutely bent to bear our purpose through.

For, just as it is obvious that deep and comprehensive knowledge, a burning conviction, and a determined will, are things without which no objective of any dimensions can be made, just so is it evident that ignorance of the principles involved and indifference, especially on the part of the leaders, to the shame that awaits us should we fail, are the surest means to mar this national enterprise.

Furthermore, where two cultures have to live within the bosom of one State, there is ever present the danger of impatience and arrogance on the part of the dominant group. Why all this insistence by the smaller partner on respect for their values, while things would be so much easier, for everybody, if the obvious culture were adopted by all?

And as the majority can, and do, so easily seize key positions in government, in the public services, in commerce and industry, impatience tends to degenerate into overweening insolence. This has been the experience in Belgium and Canada where it has provoked seething and

¹³ Acts, 7, 1. — Mgr. Knox's Version.

frustrating resentment.

There can be no way more infallible to ruin the Cameroon experiment than to poison feelings and relations between the two cultural groups in Cameroon, in this fashion.

It is therefore of the utmost urgency that the minority should always show proof of judgement and restraint in their demands, and that the majority, for their part, should respect very scrupulously the principles of cultural equality and equal participation, and should refrain from any attitude which smacks, even remotely, of the intention to impose their own way of doing things on the whole community.

One of the causes of the cultural strife that rends countries like Belgium and Canada is the deep emotional attachment of each corn-community to its uses and its language. But here in Cameroon, in so far as the foreign cultures we have inherited are concerned, there is no reason, whatsoever, for any such attachment.

If a rich and harmonious cultural integration is to be achieved, it will be absolutely necessary for us to keep towards these cultures the cold and searching attitude of the scientific enquirer bent upon the truth, the disciplined nerve of the surgeon coldly plying his saving knife in spite of his compassion for the patient's agony.

But, in this country, the elite, especially, has become so imbued with these outside cultures that this emotional detachment is not to be taken for granted. There is a real danger that, called upon, in the general interest, to part with an element of the foreign culture in which we have been bred, some of us would take up arms in a blind and headstrong crusade, in the wrongheaded belief that the surrender of such a use or institution is a defeat and humiliation. In other words, if we become pseudo-Englishmen or pseudo-Frenchmen, we will surely get enmeshed in pointless, cultural wrangling; and goodbye to all hopes for a healthy harmonization of cultures in Cameroon.

I have talked so much of the French and the Anglo-Saxon cultures that I seem to have drowned under the flood of my words the principle which, earlier in this essay, I laid down as the fundamental one in this work of cultural integration, namely, that African culture must be the stock onto which the foreign borrowings should be grafted so that the sap that enlivens the whole and confers oneness on the entire organism should be African.

Furthermore, I pointed out this other significant fact that initiative in things cultural here lies, not with the traditional masses, but with the

westernised few.

Now, the greatest of the dangers, that threaten this cultural integration from within, is that this up-rooted elite, this westernised leadership may be, not just merely ignorant of, or indifferent to, African values; worse, they may spurn them under-foot as only fit for the scrap-heap.

For the most resounding success of the colonial system is that it provoked the Negro's negrophobia, the Blackman's hatred of himself.

By denying the African past, by refusing any value to anything African, by a campaign of mockery, insult and denigration, by the deliberate inculcation of an inferiority complex, colonialism drove the Blackman to despise, not only himself and the works of his mind and hand; it also convinced him that the only salvation possible, from his savagery and barbarism, was to become a white-man.

Thus the colonised Negro's psyche is infected with a double neurosis: the flight-from-self or the flight-from-blackness, and the yearning-to-be-white. Such frivolities, among Negro women, as the straightening of hair, the rouging of lips, the bleaching of skin, such attitudes as the neglect or the refusal, on the part of some of the elite, to teach their children their own native tongue, are symptoms of this trauma, a wound that festers deep.

The worst effect of colonialism, therefore, is neither the political nor even the economic, but the cultural- because it is self-detestation, because it is debasing apert, because it is internal- the enslavement of the mind.

Thus, unless our westernised intelligentsia and leadership, endowed as they are with know-how and power for cultural advancement, are convinced of the urgent need to cure this disease, this yearning-for-whiteness, and bring back the Blackman home to himself, and teach him anew to see and savour the beauty of things black; unless it is borne in upon them that all cultural building here would be on so much sand, if it is not firmly based on the African bed-rock, there is not the slightest chance that cultural integration in Cameroon, (if achieved) will be sound and genuine, solid and authentic.

Cultural Peace or Cultural Strife

In conclusion, I would say again that of the four possible cultural policies I listed at the start of this essay, only two merit any consideration, namely, parallel development and cultural integration.

If we choose the former, it would be necessary, as I have said already, to revise our constitution drastically leaving a minimum of powers like

diplomacy, defence and money, to the federal government and handing over all the rest to the federated states, so that, within this loose framework, each may walk its calm, sequestered road. But as I have pointed out, to choose this policy would be to frustrate the high hopes that fired the struggle for reunification.

Cultural integration is the only option worthy of us and, if it is to succeed, it must be guided by knowledge and principle, it must be pursued with care and method and energy.

In bringing this essay to a close, I am reminded of the Irish revolutionary who said that, in national action, littleness is more fatal than the wildest rashness, because if you want a people to give its utmost, in heroic effort, you must raise up, for their striving, a target worthy of such striving, by reason of its excellence.

This is the merit of this prospect of cultural integration in Cameroon; for this historic mission is sure to arouse the young and the gifted, the daring and the wise, precisely because it is a challenge: a challenge that will show whether the Cameroon people are worthy of noble enterprise, whether they can rise to a heroic occasion.

Finally, we must get it borne in upon us that success in this undertaking is not merely an opportunity, for us, to deck ourselves with laurels in the eyes of the world; for we must never forget that our very day to day well-being is at stake in this affair, because, according as we choose the right road or the wrong, according as we accept or reject healthy cultural integration, the issue, for us, shall be cultural enrichment or cultural penury, cultural harmony or cultural chaos, cultural peace or cultural war.

Now we know where we are and whither we should tend; we are thus in a position to judge what to do and how to do it; in a position to decide whether, in this noble, unprecedented enterprise, we shall build or ruin. A choice that should make us pause and ponder.

In this far-reaching affair, we have it full in our power to make. But should we choose instead to mar, we would be guilty of irresponsibility grave in the extreme. For, perhaps, we might never again be given the chance to mend.

Part IV
Under the Sign of the Rising Sun

Under the Sign of the Rising Sun

*I tell you nought for your
comfort, yes, nought for
your desire, save that the
sky grows darker yet And
the sea rises higher.*

(G.J Chesterton, *The Ballad of the White Horse*)

With the Morning Sun for Symbol, President Ahmadou Ahidjo and Vice-President John Ngu Foncha have won an overwhelming mandate from the Cameroon people.

If ever there was a date-making event in Cameroon history, this is it; for never before, since the hour when this country awoke from political slumber, has an agreement as spectacular and as unanimous as this ever been readied among the inveterate, ever-warring Cameroon political factions.

Thus, quite apart from the fact that it is the first time ever that Cameroonians have elected their supreme political chiefs by universal adult suffrage, quite apart from the fact that it has brought an end to the transitional period in our constitutional life, quite apart from the fact that it was achieved with the Rising Sun for Sign, this event deserves, by reason of the historic unanimity it aroused, to usher in a new and endless day in the life of this country, so that the unity thus achieved and the strength that this unity entails should come to stay.

But this will not happen without an effort, on the part of the parties now in power, an effort at reflection, an effort at bold decision.

In ascetic theology, there is a principle that whoever wants to keep on the path of virtue should never forget to undertake, at the close of each day, an examination of conscience in order to see where he slipped, where he scored; in order to be able to better his spiritual record each succeeding day. It is a principle whose worth is recognised by all who seek success, whatever be their enterprise. Commercial houses especially know the value of this practice and take stock at regular periods in order to keep the wolf of bankruptcy as far as possible from the door. It would be folly if, in a question of such undisputed necessity, political parties show less wisdom than trading firms.

At the close of the transitional period, therefore, on the eve of the new

day ushered in by the historic victory of our leaders, it is precisely to such a taking of stock, to such a session of autocriticism, to such an examination of conscience, that I wish to invite the party to which I belong – the Kamerun National Democratic Party.

A political party in office is like a traveller; and the welfare of the people from whom it holds mandate is its ultimate destination.

Now, anybody about to go on a journey must first ask himself these questions: Where am I going? Why am I going there? How best shall I get there – on foot, by road, by rail, by sea or by air?

It would be a madman who would jump out of bed, of a morning, as though in a dream, and take to the road before asking himself: Where the hell am I going?

Whatever people do in this world, therefore, they cannot do it well unless they first sit down and give clear answers to these questions: What? Why? How?

Judged by this criterion the Cameroon people, in the past have shown quite a degree of political maturity. For, right from, the beginning of our political awakening, back in the early 1950s, they had it clear in their minds where they wanted to go; they set their goals clearly before their eyes — independence and reunification; and they knew precisely how to go about them. And today, both goals have been won.

But in those days, we were so taken up with the struggle to attain these objectives that we tended to forget a very important thing, namely, that these, for all their unquestionable importance, were merely events that would come with time and pass with time. We were so engrossed in independence and reunification that hardly anybody ever stopped to ask himself the question: After independence and reunification, what next? Not to talk of the why and the wherefore, or the how of that next thing. We forgot that, for all their worth, independence and reunification were only a means to an end, not an end in themselves; they were the conditions which would make it easier for us to obtain something else.

It was therefore necessary, right from the start, to define that something else, to determine its purpose and to work out further ways and means of its attainment.

In fact, so little thought did we give to what would happen on the morrow reunification that we forgot completely to make provision for even the most obvious things. For example: everybody knows what an important role language has to play in the transaction of any business whatsoever.

Nobody needed to be reminded that, in the event of reunification, language difficulties would arise. One side speaking French and the other speaking English, there would obviously be felt the crying need for chaps speaking both.

Here, in West Cameroon, we had a college like Bali which had the foresight to include French in its syllabus. The thing to have done, long before reunification came, was to have picked the most promising among these boys and to have sent them to universities to acquire a firmer grasp of this language. But, except my memory serves me wrong, nobody thought of that.

You cannot improvise efficient government at random. Success in politics demands insight and foresight. A good State is not the work of chance but of knowledge and purpose; that is what Aristotle asserted thousands of years ago; and Plato his forerunner is famous for having laid down that either kings must be philosophers or philosopher kings.

Most of our present difficulties, indeed, stem from the fact that we have never taken the trouble to see far and to plan ahead; that we have never taken the trouble to calculate how best to use our strong points, how best to exploit our advantages.

Our practice has been to start grappling with difficulties only when we come up bang against them.

The time has now come for things to be done methodically.

The time has now come for us to define our objectives, to fix our goal and to map out clearly the road we should take to get there.

Time for Ideological Politics

This is all the more important because, now that independence and reunification have come and gone, there is no other spectacular landmark in sight, there is no longer any exhilarating event to whip up popular enthusiasm and rally the masses round for common, vigorous action.

When independence and reunification were things of the future, when the fight for them was on, the people were wont to flock round a leader who, to them, embodied the spirit of the struggle and who became, as it were, the voice of their aspirations.

Now the period of charismatic leadership is past, because the days of dramatic incident are gone, and have yielded place to times of dull unexciting drudgery. In such days as these, it is not easy to get whole populations to

troop spontaneously round an individual because there is hardly anything inspiring enough to whip up their enthusiasm.

In such times as these, there is only one effective way to rally a people round: it is to put before them Ideas powerful, magnetic and irresistible.

Briefly, in such undramatic situations, event-orientated politics must yield place to ideological politics – politics based on fundamental and relevant doctrines, principles, ideas.

Need To Win Over the Youth

Furthermore, hitherto, we have been dealing with populations that are largely illiterate; and the less educated people are, the more susceptible they will be to hero-worship, the more natural it is for them to follow a paternalist leadership.

But mind you, education is spreading fast, our youths are going here, there and everywhere, in tens and hundreds, for further studies – to America, England, France, Germany, Italy, Scandinavia, Czechoslovakia, Poland, the Soviet Union, India, and, soon, you may be bound, they will be going even to China! And as sure as you are reading this, a good many of them will come back, not just B.A.s or B.Sc.s, as before, but Ph.D.s in this, that and the other thing!

They will come back with highly critical minds, and will not be prepared to follow any leadership unless that leadership can compel their respect by profound principle and dynamic action.

If we want to win our youth, if we want to win the strong minds that are coming up, the time to begin is now. We should set ourselves, right from this moment, to give them a leadership that is at once ideological, intelligent, magnetic and effective. We must prove to them, concretely, that the K.N.D.P. is a party solidly based on principle, not one that is swayed, here and there, by the wanton wind of expediency; a party that shapes and controls the future not one that is helpless at the mercy of events.

Unless we do this, not only will we fail to win over youth and intelligence to our side, but we will certainly have trouble on our hands in the future.

For trained minds will hardly submit to a clumsy, bungling, muddled-headed leadership which, even with all the good will in the world, they cannot sincerely bring themselves to respect.

You might try to frighten them into subjection. But for how long? The Whiteman, with all his might to mind and arm, could not succeed in keeping

the emasculated and despoiled African under for even sixty years!

A Soul for the Party

Now, therefore, is the time for us to give this party d new birth, a new life, a new orientation, a new driving force. Now is the time for us to define, in unequivocal terms, what the role of government should be.

Now is the time to pledge ourselves, solemnly, that our administration shall see to it that even the humblest citizen is served. Now is the time to pledge ourselves, that we will scrupulously see to it that justice is done without fear or favour; that we shall dutifully respect the dignity of the individual.

Now is the time for us to state clearly how we intend our resources – mineral, vegetable and animal – to be exploited and developed. Shall we allow them to be owned and worked by the few for their own exclusive benefit, or shall they be owned and controlled and exploited, in the main, by the State, through corporations and agencies, for the good of the many? We have to say now whether, in our view, government should not participate, in trade, wholesale and retail, in order to protect our people from the unscrupulous exploitation of foreign monopolies.

As development, thus conceived, requires citizens intelligent, well-educated, skilled and disciplined, we should define how we intend to organise the education and the training of our youth, in order to fit them to share effectively in the achievement of our objectives; how we want our education system to be shaped in order to further the bilingualism and the cultural integration necessary to make reunification succeed.

Seeing how indispensable unity is for the genuine liberation of the African peoples, we should state unequivocally what form we believe this unity should ultimately take, if such unity is to be real and effective.

Finally, although we are a country small and powerless, yet we are as sovereign as any other; moreover, whatever the super-powers do will inevitably effect our lives; therefore, we have the inalienable right to make our voice heard on major world issues, and to make our stand unmistakably clear in world affairs.

It is only when we have got our principles clearly de-lined, when we have set ourselves, energetically, to achieve them that we will become a political party worthy of the name, a fit candidate for office; it is only then that we will win to our side the strong men coming up, the strong men and the

strong minds getting stronger!

A political party is like a human being in this that it must have a soul endowed with a mind and a will.

The corpus of the principles that animate and guide its activities constitutes its mind. Without this mind, without this source of life, we are not a political party in the true sense of the word, but merely a formless collection of individuals, a crowd, worse, a rabble.

A Will for the Party

I have said that a political party, like a human being, must have a mind and a will. If its body of doctrine constitutes its intellect, what then is its will? This will can be no other thing than its authority, its discipline. Without discipline no party, however sound its ideas, can hold together; once discipline begins to slacken, disintegration sets in and the death knell of the party begins to toll.

What does discipline demand?

Discipline demands three things:

First, that the powers of party organs and party officials should be clearly and unequivocally defined, so that no one in the party should be in any doubt whatsoever as to what those powers are.

Secondly, these powers should be strictly enforced without fear or favour, without respect of persons; for no one in the party should be above the party's authority.

Thirdly, flouting the party's will should be punished with appropriate sanctions.

In brief, if discipline is to be, the party's constitution must be treated and respected as the highest law, as a sacred document, as the last word.

Yet we all know that, in some political parties, there are often individuals who, if they disagree with their party, for purely personal reasons and not on principle, it is the party that will bend before them, not they before the party. Such a spirit should be kept completely out of ours; it deserves to be condemned in all the moods and tenses; deserves to be put down with a stern and strong hand.

The Strength of a Party

Lastly, just as a human person has a body with physical parts, just so a

political party has its members and its organs; and if the party is to function like a living organism, its members and parts must be well organised, that is, not only should their powers and roles be defined, but a rigid hierarchy should be established among them, so that no one should be in any doubt as to which organ is highest, which next, which last; what officer comes first, in rank or authority, who follows, who next.

Ideology, discipline, organisation, these are the forces that endow a political party with strength.

I would like to dwell a bit on this question of what makes a party strong; for I have sometimes heard some very strange ideas expressed on this point by some members of this party.

Just one example.

I was once present at a gathering of K.N.D.P. members where the question arose as to whether a certain decision taken by the government was right or wrong, just or unjust.

Examining the facts that led to that decision, some of us, in a cold, objective spirit, held that the evidence that we had before us was not conclusive enough to justify that decision; that the said decision was therefore wrong and that, in all sincerity, the only right course left for the government to take was to reverse that decision.

To our utter amazement one of those present stood up and said:

“The decision of the government was wrong; I agree; but there can be no question of the reversing it; once a government has taken a decision it must stand firm by that decision even if it is unjust; to go back on it would be a sign of weakness.”

To the speaker, therefore, a strong party or government is one that stands firm by its acts even when the said acts are wrong and unjust.

Who says yes to such a thesis?

This kind of strength is the strength of a bully; and every school boy knows that, in his heart, every bully is a coward. A bully *is* a fighter only when he meets the defenceless and the weak; but when he comes up against his match he sneaks away, with his tail between his legs!

Let us get it very clear, therefore, in what the strength of a party consists!

A man is strong, in the true and complete sense of strong, when his mind is sound, when his character is firm and constant in the right, when his physical frame is vigorous and perfect.

In like manner, a party can be said to be strong only, when its principles are so true that no one can challenge them; when its authority is strictly enforced on all its members without fear or favour; when its organisation is sound, firm and smooth; when its action is dynamic and effective.

Truth of principle, firmness in authority, soundness of organisation, dynamism in action – these are the only genuine hallmarks of a strong political party.

The Forces of Disruption — Insubordination

Talking about the incident I have recalled above leads me to ask a further question, and it is this: What are the evil forces that disrupt a party, tear it into warring factions and finally destroy it?

There are many, but I will single out just a few.

First, you have the altitude of those people without any ideological orientation, those who join a party, not because they are animated by any ideal, or because they want to fight for any principle, but because they want to use the party as a stepping-stone to private gain or personal power and aggrandisement. It is this inordinate ambition that kicks at party discipline and stirs up factious feuding and disruptive tendencies.

Here also is the place to call attention to one epidemic that is raging throughout newly independent Africa — the itch to get rich quick. It is a malady that can ruin the reputation of a party and discredit it completely in the eyes of the people.

Driven by this disease some espouse nationalist causes, enlist in popular parties and shout slogans till they are hoarse in order to capture places of influence within the organisations and exploit them to enrich themselves by corruption, shady business deals, and all sorts of cloudy practices.

But one thing is certain, namely, that in countries as poor as ours, the people, however simple and loyal they may look, soon begin to take notice, to discuss and to get covertly indignant.

And such indignation has sometimes erupted into overt violence.

It is reported that in the riots which brought down the You Lou regime, in Brazzaville, in August 1963, the mob, running amuck, made straight for the sumptuous mansions that ministers had built for themselves or for their mistresses and wreaked their wrath on them by tearing them down or setting them ablaze.

This itch to get rich quick is also working havoc in the public services

where some who cannot get preferment by talent, industry, efficiency, and merit strive to secure it by courting politicians and by telling tales against colleagues whom they know to be their betters in order to bring them down and rise in their stead. It is a practice that poisons the public services with frustration and bitterness, enfeebles them with inefficiency and indifference and renders output poor and low.

A merciless war must be waged against corruption and such sinister practices.

No one expects a political organisation to be a communion of saints, nor that politicians should, like Mahatma Ghandi, take a perpetual vow of poverty.

But to look on helpless in the defeatist belief that politicians cannot help being crooks would be a most unfortunate attitude.

Those who hold the leadership have a duty to cultivate the spirit of poverty, to cultivate the highest possible degree of disinterestedness and detachment, themselves, and to keep eternal vigilance against dishonesty and corruption.

This personal integrity will strengthen their hand and enable them to take the imperative ruthless action to root out crockery from the ranks.

A party which is heedless of this, heads for disaster.

Intolerance or Criticism

Another thing as baneful to party welfare as insubordination and corruption on the part of the rank and file is intolerance on the part of the party leadership. Any opinion that differs from theirs is frowned upon as rebellion and criticism, as if criticism as such is a bad thing. Nothing should be voiced except what pleases their ears.

And before long, with the fear of death upon them, the rank and file are cowed into cringing yes-men and craven time-servers.

And soon the point is reached where leaders are lauded to the skies even when they are blundering before everybody's eyes. No one will screw up the courage to tell them to be ware.

A classic example that comes to mind is that of a man like the famous Italian Duce, Benito Mussolini.

"Mussolini is always right," chimed the Italians as Il Duce blundered his way, deeper and deeper, into self-deception and final catastrophe.

Where democratic freedom of expression, where full, free and frank

debate and constructive criticism are suppressed, where leaders are not prepared to face the truth when it is bitter, a party becomes warped, rigid and sterile, barren of ideas, incapable of constructive action, incapable of peaceful self-renewal.

It turns its leaders into tyrants and debases its rank and file into cowards, sycophants and hypocrites.

A Veritable Canker

But a disruptive force, a wicked practice, that is working havoc in this party and in this country, and one that should be singled out for the severest condemnation, is slander, backbiting, character assassination – whichever you will.

I am qualified to speak about this thing because I have been the victim of it myself.

Today it is easy for anybody to approve or condemn me because I have been writing and publishing and there are things down in black and white that can be cited for, or against me.

But when I came back from Europe, early in 1961, I was as silent as a grave. And yet some of the things that I heard circulating about me were fantastic: some said I was a member of the OK; others that I had joined the communist party while a student in France! Once in Buea I heard that I had been seen in Kumba addressing an OK rally. I was told of meetings being held, files being compiled – all on my head!

I mention these things not that I cared (I didn't give a damn); I mention them because, from them, I learnt, through very personal experience, how very false and groundless these accusations can be. I have myself heard men, whom I know to be good and sincere, roundly condemned as evil and wicked by people who don't know them one-fifth as much as I do.

And thus relations between party members, between fellow citizens, are poisoned; thus suspicion is sown in the community; and persons who otherwise would be of untold service to the party and to their country are ostracised as though they were lepers.

Thus we are often witnesses of the strange phenomenon where chaps who are regarded as staunch party men, one day, are roundly denounced, the next day, for no proven reason, as fomenters of subversion.

All of us here know how much suffering this kind of thing has brought down not only on single individuals but also on whole families,

If we want this party to give a healthy and enlightened leadership to this country, we should declare a merciless war on this wickedness.

To the would-be hate-monger and purveyor of lies and slander I would say this: Before you open your mouth to speak against any person, think twice and ask yourself whether what you are about to say is true, whether such tale-bearing is worthy of you,

And remember this, that, if an innocent man's career is ruined by your back-biting, you are guilty of a crime that finds ready forgiveness neither in this world nor in the world to come!

Before you indulge in such practices, reflect and ask yourself how you would like it yourself to be the victim of such wickedness.

To the leaders of the party I would say this: Be slow to believe the evil you are told about others; and slower still to act upon it.

Let your golden rule be the principle that was laid down by the famous Greek writer, Sophocles, thousands of years ago, when he said in one of his immortal plays: I impute no Guilt until Guilt is proved.

That is the principle on which hangs the whole system of our administration of Justice, namely, that no man is evil unless it is conclusively shown, by objective evidence, that he is so.

For, it is far better, in my view, to risk letting ten guilty men go free so that one innocent man may not be punished in error, than to punish ten innocent men in order to make sure that one guilty man does not escape.

This tendency of tale-bearing, eaves-dropping, and character assassination should be given no quarter whatsoever; it needs to be stamped out ruthlessly; eradicate it completely; for it is like a cancer eating away at the very vitals of this party, and poisoning the very substance of the body politic.

We have come to a situation ridiculous and puerile in the extreme, a situation to be condemned and rejected out of hand, where some Cameroonians may not even speak to others not to talk of visiting them, lest someone should see and report, lest it should be said that they are carrying on subversive activities.

Often I am tempted to ask the following questions; This party has won quite a number of elections, and won them handsomely; it won the plebiscite with a landslide – why then is it not sure of itself? Why all this nervousness? Why all this subversion mania? Why all these fears? Are we still in the days of the thirteen-thirteen?

For, I will tell you frankly, this sort of behaviour is characteristic, more often than not, of people who are not sure of themselves.

Of course every government must have a well-trained, efficient and well-equipped, even scientific, intelligence service, in order to get the accurate truth. But the sort of thing I am condemning is a definite aberration, because our havoc-working tale-bearers, for the most part, are notable neither for their training nor for their sincerity nor even for their intelligence. In fact, they are nothing but low, mean, cowardly knaves.

Once again I call upon this party to rid itself of this poison for once and all, to tear out this evil root and branch, and let us have a renovated party animated by mutual trust and a spirit of genuine brotherhood.

The Mainstay of the State

I cannot leave this topic without a word about the civil service. If a state can be compared to a building, the civil service is its foundation: its source of strength, the principle of continuity, a bulwark in stormy weather provided, of course, that it is highly qualified, efficient and loyal.

Before De Gaulle's Fifth Republic brought political stability to France, government rose and fell with bewildering frequency. In fact, there came a time when, if a government was still in power a year after taking office, people began to feel that it had stayed too long and should give way to another! With ministers coming and going in such rapid succession, one can imagine by what utter confusion France would have been overwhelmed! But this did not happen; the nation's business went on steadily, thanks, largely, to its competent and skilled civil service.

At this period of our history, when our life as a nation is in its infant stage, it is obvious 'that one of the foremost duties of the government is to give the country a solid civil service – to provide it at all levels, with members that are adequately educated, trained and skilled and to give it a smooth organisation, effective methods of operation and attractive conditions of work.

On their part, in addition to comprehensive knowledge and skill, which are obvious, civil servants should bring to their work sincerity, loyalty and courage-Sincerity: in the execution of their duty, they should be guided by the facts of each case, the principles involved and the dictates of their conscience: deceit and time-serving should be completely out of the question.

Loyalty: whatever be the political ideology of their bosses, civil servants are bound to serve them faithfully. In England, lately, there was a Tory

government, now the country is run by socialists; and the British public service, whatever be the political inclination of each several member, have been loyal to both. There is no contradiction in this; for each government that rules, in a democratic system, is the choice of the people; and, in serving each, in suppressing his personal inclinations and submitting himself to the will of the people, *the* public servant does not betray his conscience; on the contrary, in doing so, he is only being loyal to the democratic principle that the will of the majority is supreme.

A West Cameroon civil servant who detested reunification before the Plebiscite is no traitor to his soul, if, after the Plebiscite, he worked tooth and nail to make reunification succeed; far from that, he would be obeying a very lofty principle.

The culprits are those who, after the people's will has been manifested with such abundant clarity, remain inveterate in their hostility and strive to sabotage the success of the people's purpose.

A public servant needs courage because he may happen to be serving a wrongheaded boss who, out of lack of adequate knowledge or for any other motive, insists on carrying through actions harmful to the welfare of the State, harmful even to the very policy which his party has pledged itself to fight for. In that case, it is the duty of the civil servant to speak up plain and clear. He who crumbles into a yes-man, in such a situation, is a traitor to his soul, a traitor to his profession.

A civil service of this calibre equipped with thorough knowledge, skill, industry, sincerity, loyalty and courage is one of the highest assets that a country can have. On the contrary, one that is incompetent, fraudulent and spineless is a bane to the State.

One of the things we have to examine in this session of autocriticism, therefore, is whether this party has been striving to give this State a solid civil service. Has promotion always gone to efficiency, skill and integrity? Is scrupulous care taken to run the public services according to established rules?

Such are the points that deserve deep meditation.

For, if the grumbling one hears, up and down West Cameroon, can be taken as a sign, it would appear that all is not well with this State's public services. In fact, it seems that, in certain departments, the relations between civil servants and politicians are degenerating from covert hostility into overt antagonism.

If this situation continues and becomes general, it can only redound to

the ruin of the State.

I can imagine nothing more deadly to a government than to have in its hands a whole public service disenchanted, disgruntled, embittered in rebellion!

The position is more serious still if the political authorities themselves are the witting or the unwitting cause of such a state of things.

There can be no question about it; if we want to lay a solid foundation for our political institutions, we will have to give particular attention to the establishment and the consolidation of an efficient and faithful civil service. High standards of education, professional skill uprightness and discipline will have to be the rule.

Preferment will have to be awarded to merit and integrity and all practices that smack, even remotely, of favouritism or nepotism must be declared anathema.

Ruthless severity must also be meted out against those of the civil servants who strive to feather their own nests by courting the favour of politicians and by trying to ruin their colleagues through gossip and character assassination. It should be made abundantly clear that no one shall win advancement by such black-hearted wickedness.

Another point to stress is that we should never, because of a transient, doubtful advantage, countenance practices which violate principle.

It would appear, for example, that in elections some civil servants campaign more and more openly for the government party.

But, unless I am mistaken, the principle we have inherited from the British is that, when the struggle for office is on between parties, a civil servant has but one law to obey, namely, to go about his duty, to take no sides, to hands off completely.

And if this rule is to be followed strictly, it is not only those who campaign against the government that deserve to be disciplined severely, but also those who campaign for the Government; the activities of both constitute a breach of principle.

On the eve of the past presidential elections a noteworthy thing happened, although it mostly passed unnoticed: the word went out from the Presidency ordering civil servants to stay at their posts and leave the campaign to the politicians.

This was exactly what should be.

For A Spirit of Give And Take

This practice of slander-mongering and tale-bearing, as I have said, has done harm not only to the party but also to the country at large.

In Cameroon, as elsewhere, a government that wins office can only hold it for a definite number of years; after that, it must return to the country for another mandate.

As I see it therefore, it is but common sense, on the part of the party in power, to do all it can, not only to keep on its side those who voted for it in the previous election, but also to go all out to win over as many as possible of those who formerly voted against it.

That is why, once the virulence of an electoral campaign is over – if virulence there should be – a wise government, especially in a country like ours, should adopt a friendly attitude towards its opponents. That is why, once in office, a party should think less of itself and more of the country. That is why its chief, now Head of State or Government, should cease to be merely a party leader and ‘Should become a statesman, the father of his nation.

That is why his sole concern, insofar as his whole people are concerned, should be to gather, not to scatter.

In other words, it is wisdom, even a duty, on government’s part to put an end to inter-party strife and work for national unity.

If national unity is necessary in normal circumstances, it is all the more so for us because, with reunification, we are faced with a task above the normal, a task fraught with problems foreseen and unforeseen; problems which hardly any other African country has ever faced before.

One would have expected that, in such an emergency, in such an exceptional state of things, our leaders would have the breadth of mind and the largeness of heart to sink party differences and crush down personal animosities and join hands for the country’s good.

But this did not happen.

I am not here to apportion blame for this failure, but I think it should go on record that one of the most unfortunate and regrettable things about our present history is that West Cameroon went into this federation, not as a united front, but as a disorderly crowd torn into hostile factions.

The President himself saw what a sorry thing this was, and in two memorable speeches, first at Victoria, in 1962, and then at Njinikom, in 1963, he sounded a clarion call for national unity and pleaded with the West

Cameroon leaders to sink their differences and unite, first among themselves, and then with their colleagues of the East, it was a call that rang so piercing and true that the wonder is that, right up till today, it has roused no! An echo!

Yet, I do not think it is too late!

On the contrary, there has hardly been a moment more favourable for this rapprochement than the present. For by their warm and active support for the presidential list, in the recent elections, the opposition have given proof of a good-will that deserves to be saluted. It was a warm hand stretched out in friendship and it would be folly to refuse to grasp it as warmly.

Political wisdom demands that no attempt should be made to explain this event away to belittle its significance or to say that it was not sincere.

For my part, I firmly believe that it would be a serious blunder if we let such a golden moment pass without exploiting it for the consolidation of the nation's unity.

Public life tries human nature as by fire; tries it in defeat, tries it in victory: it reveals that sterling character which in triumph does not yield to arrogance; and which can take reverses with the spirit of a sportsman. If these two qualities – generosity in victory and equanimity in defeat – were present, on one side and on the other, respectively, on the morrow of the referendum, things would be better for us today.

But unfortunately, the sentiments that held sway then were overweening insolence, on the side, and resentful bitterness, on the other.

But as I have said, it is not too late; each side can still take a step towards the other. All that we need is a mutual brotherly spirit of give and take.

Jomo Kenyatta and Ronald Ngala have done it over in Kenya. Why can't Foncha and Endeley do it here?

Those in power should realise that, since they occupy the upper place, it is for them to come down a little. You cannot bring up those who are already under by pushing them lower still. You cannot win the good-will and the co-operation of your brothers by approaching them with the allure of those who seek to humiliate them further.

It is a sobering thought and one that fosters tolerance and humility, for those in office to remain themselves, now and again, of the time when they were not in power, to think often of the day when they must relinquish office; for, as sure as death, no party is destined to rule any country, as the prayers say, for ever and ever, world without end!

You are in today, out tomorrow, however long your day may be. Once

the Whigs ruled England for fifty years at a stretch, but they fell in the end, notwithstanding! That is the iron law. Therefore, while you wield power, show mercy and use that power to do good, even to your enemies.

The opposition, on the other hand, should realise 'hat a sullen, inveterate spirit that rejects all compromise, 'hat finds fault with everything, that is unwilling to forget, will lead nowhere, will remain forever sterile. Like the snake that stings itself, this festering spirit does the most harm to those in whom it rankles-

Since this federation came into being, the President has been calling and calling for national unity.

It is time that voice were heard.

For us, in West Cameroon, the method he has proposed is the best; union among ourselves here first and then with the rest of the nation. It is a pity that this was not achieved long before now, yet as I have said, there is still time; for, as the saying goes, it is never late to mend.

The Time Is Now

The burden of this article is that the time has come to give this party a new birth, to imbue it with a new spirit, a new life, a new dynamism: to give to it, anew, an ideological, a moral and an effective youth and vigour worthy of the new era that has been horn Under the Sign of the Rising Sun.

If we are to bear through this work of renewal, if we are to make this party one that will gather round itself the youth and the intelligence of this State, we must give it right from now, a well-defined doctrine; we must streamline its organisation and strengthen its authority; we must foster unify and brotherhood among our party members in particular, and among all Cameroonians in general; we must pronounce a severe and final anathema against such disruptive and hate-inciting practices as inordinate ambition, corruption, laxity of discipline, tolerance of criticism, spying and tale-bearing.

This work of renewal cannot afford to wait

It is only by tackling it right away and carrying it through with thoroughness that the K.N.D.P. shall become a party worthy of note and respect, at home and abroad.

But if we fail to do this duty of renovation, if we fail to stamp out abuse, if we do not care to pause and ponder and examine our conscience, and put our house in order, then you can be sure of this, that the future holds in store for us nothing for our comfort, nothing worthy of genuine pride; nothing

but fiercer wind, darker skies and stormier seas.

Part V
The Task of Today

The Task of Today

Forward ever,

Backward-never!

(Kwame Nkrumah)

The Moral Side

The New Day Dawns

The political chiefs, who, for fifteen years or so, have shared in shaping West Cameroon, and, who, over the issue of Reunification, split into two tendencies, have decided, at last, to come together once again, to form a new government, and to work together as from hence.

I was a personal witness of all that passed, before this point was reached, and I can testify that it was; move notable for the lucidness that was evident throughout the course of it, notable for its deep and genuine spirit of mutual brotherhood, and notable for the statesmanship and the restraint that was shown on either side. There was no haggling as between men, mean in mind and heart, and bent on gaining an advantage, there was no digging up of old grudges, no exaction of humiliating conditions; in this achievement, there is no winner, no loser; or rather, I should say, all are winners. It was the coming together of men who had awoke, at last, to the fact that they were no longer divided on any essential issue, that the good of the state imposed upon them the duty to work as a team; it was the reconciliation and the reunion of old friends and brothers,

It is a point worthy of note that, however much they disagreed, whatever they hurled against each other from the soap-box or across the floor of the House, whatever wrong-headed wrangling raged below, between their rank and file, the leaders of the two political tendencies in West Cameroon kept on fairly good terms, for the most part, and never indulged in that personal abuse and bitterness which would have rendered their estrangement complete and ultimate reconciliation impossible. The parliamentary

opposition, eschewing that rancour that festers from loss of office, forged for itself a new role noteworthy for its dignity; and the government, for its part, never attempted to withdraw from this opposition the legal recognition that was its due. Thanks to this situation, West Cameroon has won for itself the prestige of being the one place in West Africa (if not in all Africa) where democracy, in the British style, has lasted longest in its genuine form.

Yet it was gradually borne in upon thinking West Cameroonians that, in the absence of any fundamental ideological differences between the two sides, teaming up, for the good of the country, had become imperative; there was no sense in preserving the appearance of this British heritage, if you could discard the form of it and yet preserve intact its content and essence. Thus, when the Right Honourable Augustine Jua, in his inaugural address, on taking office, made his famous appeal to the opposition within and without the House, for good-will and cooperation, the pace of the movement was quickened and we saw, as a consequence, in the House of Assembly, a spirit of sympathetic understanding unprecedented in the history of party politics in West Cameroon.

That is why I would like to remind the leaders, who have made this decision, of the tremendous responsibility that lies on their shoulders. Between failure and success, they have no choice. They are simply condemned to succeed. They are now sailing on the river of no return. From this point, there can be no going back. Either they succeed or they will go down discredited, in West Cameroon history, forever.

Of course, the danger of failure is there and must be taken seriously. That is why the situation calls for a deal of boldness in the leadership. There should be no hesitation, no selfish calculation, no weak-kneed indecision, now that the road is clear. Let them remember what an unknown writer once said of Rome:

“Audendo atque agendo res Romana crevit, non his segnibus consiliis quae timidi conta vocant.”

“It was by daring and by doing that the Roman state grew and not by the timid policies that cowards call caution.”

Let them bear in mind that to be ever safe, is to be ever feeble; that they who never venture, never gain; that they who take no risk, win no war.

The Need for a Lofty Purpose

People get bogged down in petty jealousies and pointless wrangling where they have no noble end to strive for. But, where men's minds and hearts are gripped by a lofty and over-mastering ideal, they become so fired by it and so careless of self that they are even prepared to lay down their lives to defend or achieve it.

“When a greater and more ennobling enterprise is on foot,” said an Irish patriot, “every inferior and feebler project or proceeding will soon be left in the hands of old women, of dastards, imposters, swindlers, and imbeciles. All the strength and manhood of the nation – all the courage, energies, and ambition – all the passion, heroism, and chivalry – all the strong men and strong minds – all those that make revolutions will quickly desert it, and throw themselves into the greater movement, throng into the larger and loftier undertaking, and flock round the banner that flies nearest the sky. There go the young, the gallant, the gifted, the daring; and there, too, go the wise. For wisdom knows that in national action littleness is more fatal than the wildest rashness; that greatness of object is essential to greatness of effort, strength, and success; that a revolution ought never to take its stand on low or narrow ground, but seize on the broadest and highest ground it can lay hands on; and that a petty enterprise seldom succeeds.

It is this burning passion for noble causes that has made the heroes of history and spurred them, more often than not, to a high and tragic destiny:

... to turn their backs to the pleasant paths and their faces- to the hard paths, to blind their eyes to the fair things of life, to stifle all sweet music in the heart, the low voices of women and the laughter of little children and to follow only the far, faint call that leads them into the battle or to the harder death at the foot of a gibbet.

I blinded my eyes,
And I closed my ears,
I hardened my heart
And I smothered my desire.
I turned my back

On the vision I had shaped,
And to this road before me
I turned my face.
I have turned my face
To this road before me,
To the deed that I see
And the death I shall die.

These words are not the outcrop of a fertile or fevered poetic imagination. Padraic Pearse, whom I quote, the Leader of the Irish Rising of 1916, lived his poem to the letter; hero to the last, he was cut down by the bullets of a British firing squad, when the Rising failed.

Yet the cause which the leaders of this state are called to serve does, not exact a sacrifice as grim and as gory as this. It is a cause more peaceful, more humble, but no less noble.

And if it seizes their minds and grips their hearts, if it becomes a passion with them, an overmastering pre-occupation, it will constitute a bond of steel to bind them together. And their union will endure.

It will become a powerful flame to sear and burn out all that is base and mean; it will bore through every difficulty and shoot up, unerringly, to truth and principle: all low interests, senseless squabbling, thoughtless grudges, pointless susceptibilities, selfish ambitions, petty jealousies, will vanish like mists in its cleansing heat.

The End of Government

But what is this over-mastering aim, this high and noble purpose for which the parties now united should brace themselves?

It is two-fold – a general and a particular.

Their general purpose is the natural, formal end, without which no government would be a government; it is that which every human being ultimately looks for in all his activities whatever they may be; it is that which every community seeks to obtain, more easily, in accepting to be ruled.

But what, in fact, is this end?

Aristotle answered this question thousands of years ago:

“If there is any end which as moral agents we seek for its own sake, and which is the cause of our seeking all other ends, it is clear that this

must be the good, that is, the absolutely good.... Happiness more than anything else appears to be such a good, for we always choose it for its own sake and not for the sake of any other thing....

“Now, that form of government is clearly the best which is so organised that it enables every man, no matter who he is, to act virtuously and live happily.”

Before Aristotle, Plato, in a very famous book, laid down the same principle in a dialogue in which his hero and master, Socrates, interrogates a certain Thrasymachus.

“Then,” said I, “medicine seeks what is advantageous not to medicine, but to the body.”

“Yes,” he said.

“And horsemanship what is advantageous not to horsemanship, but to horses; and no art seeks its own advantage (for it needs nothing), but the advantage of its subject.”

“So it appears,” he said.

“But, Thrasymachus, the arts govern and are masters of their subject.” To this he agreed, though very reluctantly.

“Then no science either prescribes or seeks the advantage of the stronger, but the advantage of the weaker over which it rules?”

This also he admitted in the end, though he tried to make a fight of it. When he had made the admission, I said:

“Then does any doctor, so far as he is a doctor, prescribe or seek the advantage of the doctor rather than of the patient? For the doctor, in the strict sense of the word, has been admitted to be a ruler of bodies, and not a money-maker. Have we not admitted that advantage of the captain, but of the sailors over whom he rules?”

He agreed reluctantly.

“Then, Thrasymachus, no one in any kind of government will, so far as he is a ruler, prescribe or seek his own advantage but that of the subject of his craft over which he rules; all that he says and does is said and done with the subject in view, and for his advantage and good.”

There is no need belabouring the point. It has been held down the ages (although, for the most part, it has been abused in practice) that the formal, absolute purpose of government is the welfare of the governed. Those who wield political power, therefore, have the singular fortune of being charged with the highest mission on earth, the promotion of the happiness of man. And it is tragic, indeed, that, more often than not, this,

simple as it sounds, is completely forgotten, and government becomes a highly effective instrument for the infliction of cruelty, humiliation and

He agreed.

“And is not the ship captain, in the strict sense of the word, a ruler of sailors rather than a sailor”?

That has been admitted.

“Then such a captain and ruler will not prescribe and seek the misery.”

The political chiefs who have teamed up to usher in a new day in the life of this country must pledge themselves solemnly never to lose sight of this, that, to them, as from hence, the happiness of the Cameroon people must be the highest law, the categorical imperative over-riding all other considerations, no matter what they be.

The Twofold Objective

In order to achieve this final end, they must set for themselves two principal objectives: one moral and spiritual, for the soul, the other material and corporal, for the body.

The moral and spiritual objective that they must set for themselves is an absolute one, a question in which they have no choice, namely, the establishment of democratic government, of a democratic state.

This, I am glad to say, they have already sworn to do; for, in the joint communiqué which they issued in Yaounde, on the 19th day of August, 1965, the two parties pledged themselves “to work for the preservation of our existing parliamentary system and political institutions in West Cameroon.”

This is a point of the utmost importance. For, today, everywhere, in Africa, people are being told that, in order to speed up the economic and social development of the continent, the one party state has become a must. But almost everywhere, where this system is being implemented we witness the suppression of liberty, the elimination of debate, the imposition of silence and the rise of despotism.

In deciding to team up, to work from an alliance to complete fusion and the ultimate formation of a single party in West Cameroon, in order to promote and speed up our social and economic advancement, the two groups have taken; step which every right-thinking Cameroonian cannot but applaud. Only warped-minded men will cry it down.

But they should remember that material welfare is but one side of the story. As the Bible says, “man liveth not by bread alone.”

The moral side, the spiritual side, the side of the soul is equally imperative, if not more. Either they keep their pledge to establish democratic institutions or we will wake up one day to find ourselves in chains and hemmed in on every side by misfortunes which will not be compensated for by any measure of material development.

Therefore, since we know, from experience and from man’s natural inclination to self-will and to resentment of criticisms, that one party rule, unless built-in safe-guards are entrenched into our system, unless we are eternally vigilant, will run the risk of being debased into absolutism or autocracy, the problem we have to face in West Cameroon now is this: How are we going to set up a one-party state and yet leave our democratic system intact?

In order to solve this problem we must have it clear and precise in our minds what democracy is.

The Meaning of Democracy

The term democracy comes from two Greek words: *demos*, the people, *kratie*, to command: it is that form of government in which sovereign power resides in the people; it is, as Abraham Lincoln defined it in a famous speech, government “of the people, by the people, for the people.”

In a democracy, therefore, the common people, since they make up the majority, are the final source of power; it is the man-in-the-street, in the last analysis, whose will is decisive.

It is obvious that, owing to the largeness of modern states, and owing to the fact that, for the commonweal, countless other duties must be done, the people as a whole cannot participate in government directly; they can exercise this power only indirectly through a selected few.

The question to answer is, how these elected representatives are to use the power entrusted to them in order that the end of government, the welfare of the governed, should be attained. It is the same problem that faces the makers of the new era in West Cameroon: How shall they proceed to build in order that the soul of democracy should remain intact; in order that the principles of democracy are not impaired?

To accomplish this, they should ever bear in mind what the British

historian, Lord Macaulay once said of a Viceroy of India.

“He infused into oriental despotism the spirit of British freedom, and never forgot that the end of government is the welfare of the governed; he abolished cruel rites, effaced humiliating distinctions and allowed liberty to the expression of public opinion.”

In other words, if the new day is to bring in happiness and prosperity to West Cameroon, the new team, whose reunion has raised so much hope, if this hope is not to be foiled, must make it their foremost pre-occupation: to safeguard the rights of the citizens, to secure their liberty, to guarantee equality, to maintain the rule of law, to ensure the just and judicious exercise of power and to give free rein to full, free and frank debate in all questions concerning the public welfare.

For rights, liberty, free speech, law, equality, and justice are the essential and fundamental elements that go to make democracy.

At the risk of becoming boring, I will go into these hackneyed ideas one by one, more at length, in order to drive home the point I want to make, namely, that within the frame-work of the one party in the offing, our reunited leaders will need increased vigilance, will need to watch more carefully, in order that democratic principles should survive, should even wax stronger, in the new order of things.

Their foremost duty, as I have said will be to safe-guard the rights of the citizens.

The Meaning of Right

A right is a just claim or title to have, to possess, to use something, to act in a certain way, to enjoy a certain privilege; it is that which justly accrues or falls to one or more persons, that which one may properly claim as one's due, as one's own. Without his rights, man cannot develop himself to his fullest and best, he cannot attain that wellbeing which government or the state is meant to secure for him.

When the fathers of America met at Philadelphia, on the 4th of July 1776, to throw off Britain's yoke and to create the new nation, they laid its foundations on the principles embodied in the famous declaration;

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created

equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. — That to secure these rights. Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. — That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to affect their Safety and Happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that Governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and accordingly all experience hath shown, that mankind are more disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But when a long train of abuses and usurpations, pursuing invariably the same Object evinces a design to reduce them under absolute Despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such Government, and to provide new Guards for their future security.”

Man therefore has a right, first and foremost to his life and to all things necessary for its maintenance – food, clothing, shelter. Once born, he has the right to be brought up, the right to an education, the right, with the assistance of his parents first and society next, to realise his best self, to develop, to the utmost, his physical, mental, moral, creative and aesthetic faculties. Although man has a right to live, yet a life that is bleak and barren is no boon; for that reason, man has a claim to that which thinkers, since philosophy began, have agreed to be the summum bonum, the highest good of man, namely, happiness. Furthermore, since man is the highest thing on this earth, the only part of the bodily world endowed with mind, he has a dignity that no other being possesses; because of that dignity, man, therefore, as man, has a right to be respected.

If human life is to be secure, if all the means necessary to maintain it are to be obtained, if man is to develop his faculties and realise his best self if he is to achieve happiness, if human dignity is to remain unimpaired, one further right is absolutely necessary: man must be free and secure in his physical person, free in his mind, free in the expression of himself. It is this right to freedom that has been enshrined in such

We have rights, as I have said, in order to live and develop ‘ourselves, famous statutes as Magna Charta, Habeas Corpus, the first ten Amendments

to the American Constitution to protect and express our personality, to attain happiness. But we cannot exercise our rights regardless of the neighbour next to whom we live, regardless of society, regardless of the state. If I have a right to live, I have the corresponding duty to let others live; to give me the benefit of an education is to imply that I will use that education for the common good; for nature expects mankind to share the duties of the public care. Just as he who will not work ought not to eat, just so those who do no service have no claim to rights. Rights, therefore, go hand in hand with obligations and functions. There are roughly two degrees of rights: there are those which are necessary to man for his *esse*, for his being, his merest existence; there are those which he needs for his *bene esse*, his well-being. But, in actual life, it will not do merely to exist; *esse* and *bene esse*, being and well-being, are both necessary; therefore, the essential rights of man, demanded by both, are, as the American Declaration says, inalienable, that is they cannot be taken away from him.

But why are human rights inviolable? Why is it that a man is not thought the worse of it for being a butcher whereas a cannibal would shock us as the very embodiment of abomination?

When we consider the singular place that man occupies in the universe by reason of the faculties that distinguish him from the rest of creation, when we consider all that he has been able to achieve by the force of mind and will, we cannot but realise that here is a being above the ordinary, a being deserving of the highest respect, a being who, very often, strikes us with awe. But the dignity of man is deeper understood and appreciated by those who look upon him with the eyes of faith, who realise that here is a creature made in the image of God and meant for a supernatural and everlasting destiny. "Thou shall love thy neighbour as thyself" has been decreed to be a commandment which ranks with that which enjoins the love of God himself; and we shall be condemned or rewarded, here after, according to the treatment that we mete to our fellow men here below.

Furthermore, a cardinal rule in dealing with things is that each should be treated according to its nature; and attachment to life and to liberty, the pursuit of happiness, the thirst for respect and dignity, are cravings which well up right from the very nature of man. Rights are so inherent in man that when they are trampled down, such trampling down is bound, inevitably, to arouse resentment and to create a situation fraught with danger and disaster.

What therefore is the duty of the state, of the government, in so far as the rights of the citizens are concerned?

Before answering this question, let us ask another: which comes first, the state or the Rights of man?

The answer is very clear: in the order of time and in the order of things, rights come first; for, men had rights long before they ever thought of setting up states; in the metaphysical order, the cause exists before its effect, and to protect rights, to ensure their achievement is the very reason d'être of government. Rights are the cause, government the effect. The state therefore has no choice but to respect the rights of its citizens; the government that rides rough shod on the rights of man does so at its own risk and peril.

The Meaning of Liberty

As we have seen, man needs rights to realise his best self, to develop himself to the utmost in body, sense, mind and will. But there is one particular right which is intimately connected with the exercise of democracy – so essentially linked to it, in fact, that, where it is absent, there can be no democracy whatsoever. It is freedom, liberty.

For as we have seen, in a democracy, the people are the source of sovereignty, of power; we have seen that, owing to the vastness of modern states and to the numerous duties that must be attended to for the commonweal, they have no choice but to exercise this power indirectly, through elected representatives.

It goes without the saying, therefore, that, if there is to be democracy, the choice of these representatives must, as a first principle, be triply free, namely, free from force, free from fraud, free from corruption. There can be no democracy where people vote in fear, where elections are rigged or gerrymandered, where votes are bought and sold; because then, the so-called representatives would not be the choice of the people; for the common good would not have been the determining factor in their being voted into office.

But freedom in democratic government does not limit itself to vote; the absence of needless restraint, exemption from arbitrary control, the power to do as one likes under the light of right reason, is absolutely necessary for the development of the human personality. There are certain liberties which a citizen must have in order to be more than a passive, inert recipient of orders.

Freedom is the right by which each man, as he thinks fit, creates, for himself, his own course of conduct; the freedoms that a man must have together constitute the path through which his powers and talents must pass

to reach their fullest development.

“By liberty,” says Professor Laski, “I mean the eager maintenance of that atmosphere in which men have the opportunity to be their best selves. Liberty, therefore, is a product of rights. A State built upon the conditions essential to the full development of our faculties will confer freedom upon its citizens. It will release their individuality. It will enable them to contribute their peculiar and intimate experience to the common stock. It will offer security that the decisions of the government are built upon the widest knowledge open to its members. It will prevent that frustration of creative impulse which destroys the special character of men. Without rights there cannot be liberty, because, without rights, men are the subjects of law unrelated to the needs of personality.”

Some of the most celebrated statutes in the history of Law have been consecrated to the freedom of man. There is *Magna Charta* which forbids imprisonment without trial, there is *Habeas Corpus* which prevents people from being detained indefinitely. There is the first amendment to the American constitution which guarantees freedom of religion, of speech, and of the press; and the fourth amendment which lays down that

“the right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.”

There is, therefore, private or personal liberty, by which is meant a man's right to exercise freedom of choice in those areas of life where the results of his effort mainly affect him in that isolation by which, at least ultimately, he is always surrounded. Freedom of religion, freedom to choose a career belong to this category.

There is also political freedom which means the power to take an active part in public affairs; the power to state one's opinion on the substance of public business and to concert with others in the expression of such opinion.

For the effective exercise of political liberty two things are necessary.

The first is a good education. We all know, for example, that the struggle for Negro independence began with advance in education; before that, the

African masses, though crushed under the heaviest yoke, were dumb and inarticulate. While those who dominated them were trained to habits of authority, they, on their part, were imbued with habits of submission. Such a division of attitude can never produce political freedom; for a class trained to govern will exert its power because it is conscious of this power, while that trained in silent submission will be unable to formulate its demands. Men have to be taught from childhood that they themselves make and work institutions. The inculcation of deferential or cringing habits, therefore will never produce a free people.

The second prerequisite for the sound exercise of political freedom is the provision of an honest, straight-forward and adequate supply of information; for truth is the foundation of freedom; men cannot form a sound judgement on public issues if they haven't got the facts; and if such judgement is based on a biased presentation of the case, it cannot but be distorted. Today, especially among highly sophisticated peoples, lying, by government, has become so rampant that it has come to be taken as a matter of course, as rather in the nature of things. Modern governments thrive on propaganda; for the white-man's civilization has stimulated the creation of agencies which live on the deliberate falsification of news, This is not the road for Africa to follow, because our people shall never be able to exercise genuine political freedom, shall always go disastrously astray, if a permanent situation is created where they are obliged to formulate judgement on public affairs in a miasma of distortion.

Full, Free and Frank Debate

Of all human liberties the one that is linked most directly, most intimately, most essentially with democratic government is freedom of speech.

In America, for example, it has been enshrined in the constitution by the First Amendment which lays down that:

“Congress shall make no law... abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

If we are to have free government, it is essential that its decisions should be based on the will of those whom they affect; it is essential that nothing

should prevent a man from saying what he knows to be true and that there should be no restraint which frustrates spiritual enrichment.

If expression of opinion is followed by persecution, men, in general, will cease to speak their mind; will cease to be active citizens; and, thus, a rich and fruitful dialogue between the governing and the governed will be replaced by a sterile monologue.

Therefore, this principle cannot be over-emphasised, namely, that there can never be real liberty unless the people have the right, when it becomes necessary, to call their government to account.

Freedom of speech, it should never be forgotten, is not a favour but a right.

For if you accept the thesis that the people are the final source of sovereign authority, and that elected government holds power, as at trust, from them, you must go on to accept the logical conclusion that the people have the right, nay the duty, to examine how the men they have chosen are doing the job and to say, without let or hindrance, what they think about it.

Furthermore, if we admit as a principle that the end of government is the welfare of the governed, how can we deny the consequent principle that the people have the right to see and to say whether or not the acts and decisions of the government make or mar that welfare?

There can be no debate, therefore, on this that power is a trust, and must be held on the condition that the decisions of the state shall be subject to the scrutiny of all who come within the ambit of those decisions? That government wins genuine allegiance, not by striking fear into hearts, not by gagging the public mouth, but by the love and confidence it can inspire, by allowing liberty to the expression of sincere opinion.

There is a strong case for freedom of speech from the nature of the human faculties, which faculties are essentially limited.

No man however intelligent, however educated, however experienced, knows everything, has the monopoly of wisdom; no man however good, however sincere, however well-intentioned, is infallible. All men, rulers included, are liable to err and labour under all sorts of human imperfections.

It is therefore sane and salutary, indeed absolutely necessary, that government acts and decisions should be open to public scrutiny; it is obvious beyond all doubt that government stands to gain from a dialogue with the people.

Indeed, the deeper we look into the nature of man, the more convinced we become of the imperious need that freedom of speech should not be left

at the will and pleasure of rulers, but should be enforced by law; for man has faults which constitute the most formidable phalange of enemies that can be ranged against democracy. In him, ambition for power and wealth tends more surely towards inordinateness than towards moderation; he has a burning thirst for praise and an equally burning resentment of criticism; his tendency is to be intolerant of any opinion that goes against his own; his bene is more towards cruelty and oppression than towards charity and mercy: because of the very force of his corrupt inclinations, because of the bent of an innately twisted nature, the chances are ten to one, that, invested with supreme authority, he will become a tyrant and despot rather than a freedom-loving democrat.

Yes, this truth is overwhelming, namely, that power, by its very nature, is a very dangerous thing to those who exercise it. There is no surer force for human corruption, no surer test for a genuine, granite character, than power. It needs to be limited before it can be handled with safety.

A wise man invested with authority will guard himself against its dangers by frequent meditation: he will daily remind himself that he holds it on trust, that his highest duty is to seek the commonweal, that there is a greater Lord to whom he shall, one day, render an account of his stewardship; he will never forget his humble origin, that, after all, he is only an ordinary human being like any mother's son, and that from dust he comes and unto dust shall return.

Such thoughts, will breed humility, and humility, wise government; they will make him see the ultimate vainness and the arrant folly of human arrogance.

“For why should the spirit of mortal be proud?
Like a swift-fleeting meteor, a fast-flying cloud,
A flash of the lightening, a break of the wave,
He passes from life to his rest in the grave.

“Yea! Hope and despondency, pleasure and pain,
Are mingled together in sunshine and rain;
And the smile and the tear and the song and the dirge
Still follow each other, like surge upon surge.

“’Tis the wink of an eye, ’tis the draught of a breath,
From the blossom of health to the paleness of death,

From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud,
Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?"

This is one of the poems that Lincoln cherished, and dwelt on most.

Unfortunately, thoughts like these, men being what they are, will only find their way into the mind of one in a thousand:

Power is a heady wine and so sweet, in fact, that few have been known to lay it down willingly. The natural tendency is to develop for it an inordinate attachment, and to cling to it, desperately, to the very end. Only two famous men have given up power freely in our times: General de Gaulle and Mahatma Gandhi.

After the Second World War, de Gaulle was the strongest man in Europe; never were the highest political honours more deserved, never were the gates to absolute power flung so wide open before a national leader; France owed the salvation of her honour and her territory to de Gaulle. But when the French politicians, hungry for the old anarchic ways, rejected his plan for national reconstruction, de Gaulle lay down power and retired into silence.

Gandhi spent almost fifty years leading the fight for Indian freedom. But when independence came, it was borne in upon him that his work was done; that his role was more that of a moralist than that of a practical politician. So he handed the reins of the state over to Pandit Nehru.

But these were men above the ordinary.

To make sure, therefore, that power does not go to the heads of those who wield it, rights must be guaranteed by law and foremost among them must be the right of free speech.

Looking at human nature again, this time, not from the side of the governing but from that of the governed, we find another reason why freedom of speech is, not only a dire necessity, but also the merest common sense: this reason is that it acts like a safety valve.

If the lid and the spout of a kettle of water over a roaring fire are sealed tight, a point is reached when the expanding steam can no longer contain itself; and there is a blow up. That is why makers of steam-engines, in order to prevent disastrous explosions, provide each with an outlet fitted with a device - flap, lid or plug - which, yielding to pressure in one direction only, allows and controls the passage of steam. A valve-less engine is unthinkable.

Human emotions are like steam. If they are set aboil, where there is no vent or outlet, a point is reached where they can contain themselves no longer and there is an explosion. Where this repression and frustration of

feeling is general, boiling within a whole state, revolution is at the door.

But where there is a social safety- valve, where men are free to speak their mind without any fear whatsoever, the breaking point is seldom ever reached, even in a state where there is a stern and wilful government. For where men can “Let off steam” in this fashion, a feeling of relief and relaxation always permeates the community; and it would require discontent of really staggering proportions to bring about a blow-up. Even some of the most autocratic rulers that the world had seen recognised this fact.

It is told of Frederick the Great, the founder of German might, that he was wont to go about among his people in disguise, in order to be more surely informed of public opinion, and that he was often the object of popular lampoon. One day, the story goes, someone had written an attack on the king and pasted it on a wall, and a crowd had gathered to read it. As they began to disperse, one of them was heard saying to himself, “My people and I have come to an agreement whereby they can say what they like and I can do what I like.” It was the king himself!

In places like England and France, not only is free speech taken for granted, but it is also exercised with a great deal of humour. Papers like the *Canard Enchaîné* and the *Sunday Express* have a roaring time poking fun at top-ranking politicians; and artists make good money cartooning them. The cartoons that have been made of General de Gaulle, in France and all over the world, since he came to power, can fill hefty albums.

African politics, on the contrary, are almost completely devoid of this sense of humour, this ability of perceiving and expressing the ludicrous and amusing side of very serious questions, or the funny traits of exalted personalities. In fact, in some newly independent African countries, laws have been passed laying down penalties against those who make fun of the head of state!

But saying that the government should let the people have their say, and that it should lend an attentive ear to public opinion, in no way means that it should become weak and indecisive or that it should be driven hither and thither, like a sheet before a veering wind, by what the people say. Far from it! On the contrary, nothing gives so much pride to a people as a government that is strong and firm in the right.

Any party that is a candidate for office must have a political philosophy and a policy and programme based on that ideology. And when it is voted into power, this means that its policy has been endorsed and that it has received a mandate to apply that policy. The only public opinion that is

relevant, that is worth listening to, after that, is that which helps the government to eradicate defects from this policy or to make its programme better. It will judge everything it hears mainly in the light of its principles.

Indeed, a clear-headed government, which knows where it is going, will often find itself bound to over-rule popular clamours and take very unsavoury decisions fully confident of the justice of its acts; fully confident of this, that, when the mists have cleared from the public eyes, the people will see the justness of its course and endorse those decisions.

Speaking of freedom of speech would be incomplete unless the point is stressed that the right to speak freely imposes the equally imperative obligation of being constructive and responsible in the exercise of that right.

Criticism that springs from blind and violent emotion, or that is not based on carefully-verified facts, is to be condemned out of hand. It constitutes the abuse, not the use, of free speech,

Firstly, therefore, any expression of free opinion must be based on sound knowledge, it must be preceded by an investigation, as thorough as possible, of all the facts and circumstances involved in the question concerned.

Secondly, it must be sincere: the person voicing the criticism must be convinced of the truth of what he has to say and of its usefulness to the commonweal; he should speak on the understanding that, should new facts come to light, proving him wrong, he would promptly admit error and correct himself accordingly.

Thirdly, the expression of critical opinion should be animated by charity and kindness; violent, insultive, sarcastic and humiliating language should never be excused on the pretext of the exercise of freedom of speech. Such language does good neither to those who utter it nor to those to whom it is addressed; it seldom redounds to the public good. If in any state therefore, there exist individuals with keenness of mind, knowledge and wisdom, individuals dedicated to truth and justice, animated by the deepest sincerity, moved by profound love for their fellow citizens and for their country, individuals careless of personal gain, careless of private preferment and prestige who, to promote the public welfare, speak out freely, frankly and fearlessly against falsehood and injustice – if such individuals exist in any state, I say – instead of being persecuted as a bane and a nuisance to society, they should be welcomed as a very blessing from above; because they foster the health of the body politic by keeping rulers constantly reminded that they too must be entirely subject to the rule of law.

This is the lesson that was taught by Socrates at the last and most solemn

moment of his earthly existence, when he stood trial for his life before an Athenian jury of 501 members, 399 years before Christ, or some 2,364 years ago. Because he spared no pains in urging the city's rulers towards goodness, truth and justice, he was arraigned and accused of being a menace to society. On that solemn occasion, this is what he said:

“...gentlemen, you know that I am not going to alter my conduct, not even if I have to die a hundred deaths....

“So, far from pleading on my own behalf, as might be supposed, I am really pleading on yours, to save you from misusing the gift of God by condemning me. If you put me to death, you will not easily find anyone to take my place. It is literally true (even if it sounds rather comical) that God has specially appointed me to this city, as though it were a large thoroughbred horse which because of its great size is inclined to be lazy and needs the stimulation of some stinging fly. It seems to me that God has attached me to this city to perform the office of such a fly; and all day long I never cease to settle here, there, and everywhere, rousing, persuading, reproving every one of you. You will not easily find another like me, gentlemen, and if you take my advice you will spare my life. I suspect, however, that before long you will awake from your drowsing, and in your annoyance you will take Anytus' advice and finish me off with a single slap; and then you will go on sleeping till the end of your days, unless God in his care for you sends someone to take my place.

“If you doubt whether I am really the sort of person who would have been sent to this city as a gift from God, you can convince yourself by looking at it in this way. Does it seem natural that I should have neglected my own affairs and endured the humiliation of allowing my family to be neglected for all these years, while I busied myself all the time on your behalf, going like a father or an elder brother to see each one of you privately, and urging you to set your thoughts on goodness? If I had got any enjoyment from it, or if I had been paid for my good advice, there would have been some explanation for my conduct; but as it is you can see for yourselves that although my accusers unblushingly charge me with all sorts of other crimes, there is one thing that they have not had the impudence to pretend on any testimony, and that is that I have ever exacted or asked a fee from anyone. The witness that I can offer to prove the truth of my statement is, I think, a convincing one –

my poverty.”

Such then is the principle of freedom of speech. As the need for it stems from the very nature of man, it has been laid down as necessary for the weal of the state by political philosophers right from the early ages. Plato, for instance, in one of his masterful dialogues, treats it in a discussion between three persons: an Athenian, a Cretan named Clinias, and Megillus a Spartan. He lays stress on liberty, wisdom love and law among citizens as needful for the public welfare,

Athenian: We called it a blunder to establish by law a government that is great or unblended, our idea being that a State ought to be free and wise and in friendship with itself, and that the lawgiver should legislate with a view to this. Nor let it surprise us that while we have often already proposed ends which the legislator should, as we say, aim at in his legislation, the various ends thus proposed are apparently different. One needs to reflect that wisdom and friendship, when stated to be the aim in view, are not really different aims, but identical; and, if we meet with many other such terms, let not this fact disturb us.

Clinias: We shall endeavour to bear this in mind as we traverse the arguments again. But for the moment, as regards friendship, wisdom and freedom, - tell us, what was it you intended to say that the lawgiver ought to aim at?

Athenian: Listen. There are two mother-forms of constitution, so to call them, from which one may truly say all the rest are derived. Of these the one is properly termed monarchy, the other democracy, the extreme case of the former being the Persian policy, and of the latter the Athenian; the rest are practically all, as I said, modifications of these two. Now it is essential for a policy to partake of both these two forms, if it is to have freedom and friendliness combined with wisdom. And that is what our argument intends to enjoin, when it declares that a State which does not partake of these can never be rightly constituted.

Clinias: It could not.

Athenian: Since the one embraced monarchy and the other freedom, unmixed and in excess, neither of them has either in due measure: your Laconian and Cretan States are better in this respect, as were the Athenian and Persian in old times – in contrast to their present condition. Shall we expound the reasons for this?

Clinias: By all means – that is if we mean to complete the task we have set ourselves.

Athenian: Let us attend then. When the Persians, under Cyrus, maintained the due balance between slavery and freedom, they became, first of all, free themselves, and, after that, masters of many others. For when the rulers gave a share of freedom to their subjects and advanced them to a position of equality, the soldiers were more friendly towards their officers and showed their devotion in times of danger; and if there was any wise man amongst them, able to give counsel, since the king was not jealous but allowed free speech and respected those who could help at all by their counsel, such a man had the opportunity of contributing to the common stock the fruit of his wisdom. Consequently, at that time all their affairs made progress, owing to their freedom, friendliness and mutual interchange of reason.”

The last passage is worth stressing: where rulers are not jealous of power, where free speech is allowed, where those who can give counsel are respected, men have the ample chance to contribute to the common stock of wisdom; and the state progresses, thanks to this wisdom, this friendliness, this mutual interchange of reason.

The Rule of Law

However, extolling liberty to the skies should not give the impression that it means that man is free to do just anything whatsoever. For as Professor Harold Laski says,

“Liberty is a positive thing. It does not merely mean absence of restraint. Regulation, obviously enough, is the consequence of gregariousness; for we cannot live together without common rules. What is important is that the rules made should embody an experience I can follow and, in general, accept. I shall not feel that my liberty is endangered when I am refused permission to commit murder. My creative impulses do not suffer frustration when I am bidden to drive on a given side of the road. I am not even deprived of freedom when the law ordains that I must educate my children. Historic experience has evolved for us rules of convenience which promote right living. To compel obedience to them is not to make a man un-free. Wherever there

are avenues of conduct which must be prohibited in the common interest, their removal from the sphere of unrestrained action need not constitute an invasion of liberty.”

Liberty, therefore, that is not exercised within the framework of discipline, restraint and law is the liberty, not of a rational being, but the liberty of the beast.

The freedom of the individual is limited, firstly and in general, by the fundamental law which binds all men to love the right and hate the wrong, to do good and shun evil. Coming down to concrete detail, citizens are bound to promote the common good by a scrupulous observation of the law of the land.

That the individual is bound to keep the law, is a principle that everybody takes for granted; but what may take some by surprise is that the State also, that is, the government, is under the same obligation.

Earlier in this article, I called attention to the fact that power is a dangerous thing to those who wield it; for, once tasted, it tempts governments to become absolute; that it is only secure when it is exercised with responsibility. And it can only be exercised with responsibility, when this exercise is limited by law. In other words, power has always to be used in action in accordance with strict and definite rules; and the government deserves the obedience of the community, only when it abides by those rules.

The acts of government are not right merely because it is invested with authority. There is a test by which they must be tried, a purpose towards which they must tend. That test, that purpose, the supreme law that must guide all government action is the welfare of the governed, the protection of their rights. For, the State, as I have said before, does not create rights; they stem from the nature of man, they exist before the State, and the government has no choice but to recognise them, or forfeit the obedience of its subjects. That is the fundamental reason why the citizen has the right and the duty of scrutinising both the motive and the character of governmental acts-

The government, therefore, like the ordinary citizen is bound to answer for its actions. This is what we mean, fundamentally, when we talk of the *Rule of Law*. Without the rule of law, there is either tyranny or chaos.

The Meaning of Equality

As we have seen, the first of the fundamental principles on which the Americans based their political structure, and which they considered self-evident, was that "All men are created equal."

We have also seen the classic definition which their famous president, Lincoln, gave to the democratic form of government, namely, government of the people, for the people, by the people. It is government by all, by the many, by the majority, as opposed to monarchy, government by only one man, or to oligarchy, government by the few, by a handful of men.

We have equally seen that, as it is impossible for all the people to participate directly in government, the citizens freely confer on elected representatives the authority to govern, and retain the right to withdraw this power whenever they are convinced that it is being abused.

If government based on these principles is to remain genuine and true to itself, if it is not to degenerate into government by one man or government by a coterie, then no man, no group of men, in the whole community, should have a greater privilege in the choice of these representatives than any other man or group of men. For, if that happens, the issuing government will give its obedience not to the community as a whole, but to the king-makers.

That is why the principle of One Man One Vote is the foundation on which all democracy is built. You can see, therefore, for yourself, that there can be no democracy, whatsoever, without Equality.

Although the American founding fathers, in their revolutionary fervour, declare that the idea that all men are created equal is so clear that it needs no proof, I will venture to explain it. And we will see what it is, by first seeing what it is not.

When we say that all men are created equal, we cannot mean that they are absolutely equal in everything. For, obviously, some are white, some are black, some are tall, others small, some are weak, others strong, some are healthy, others sickly, some are rich others poor.

Indeed, it is proof of the infinite genius of the Creator that men are so one and yet so many, so united and yet so divided. For, although all are men, yet each man is unique, incommunicable, alone, and can never be repeated. Of all the millions without number that shall pass through this earth, no two men shall ever be the same, even if the world goes on forever. Man is man but he is also an individual, that is, a being divided from every other being but undivided in himself; and the thing that makes him stand out from his

kind is his personality as marked out by his special qualities.

And yet we all know that it is neither colour, nor height, nor strength, nor cleverness, nor courage, nor health, nor wealth, that makes a man a man.

All men are the same in this that all have one nature, composed of a body and a soul. A human body however diminutive, however sickly, however unsightly is still a human body. A human soul however weak in mind, however feeble in will, is still a human soul. All human nature is one, is the same.

This oneness, this sameness, this identity of nature, is the basis of all human equality.

To us, all this may sound too obvious for so much stress. But let us not forget that it has been denied, and the denial led to one of the most heinous crimes in human history, namely, the enslavement of the African peoples. What made the Americans such hypocrites and their system such a mockery is that, while proclaiming that all men are created equal, they denied this equality to the Blackman. For, in America, it was officially held, at one time, that the Negro was only five-eighths a man, and therefore could be sold as a slave, and owned as a piece of property. Human equality is still being denied, the world over in ways brutal in some places, subtle in others.

Furthermore, we all know that human beings have needs: the need to live, the need for food, clothing and shelter; the need to grow, to develop themselves to the fullest, the need to be happy.

Correspondingly, they have a right to those things without which these needs cannot be satisfied.

Therefore, if human nature is basically the same, if human needs are basically the same, then we have no choice but to admit that the basic human rights are the same for every man: the right to life, the right to growth, development, education, the right to liberty, the right to seek happiness.

Identity of nature, identity of need, identity of right: this is the meaning of human equality.

The right of freedom of speech, for instance, should not be made the special privilege of those in power, or of a special class or party.

For a government, which denies to any citizen or group what it knows to be necessary for the well-being of one and all, denies them equality of citizenship; and, to that extent, forfeits its claim to the allegiance of those excluded from the enjoyment of that right.

In brief, human equality means that the things without which life is meaningless, the things absolutely necessary for every human being to

develop himself to the fullest possible, must be accessible to all without distinction in degree or kind. Difference can only be justified when the basic claims of men have been fulfilled.

In practice, therefore, equality means, first of all, the banishment of special privilege: no man should wield illicit authority, or enjoy unlawful advantages, or be heaped with favours denied to other citizens, merely because of his class, his religion, his party, his special connections with those in power, or any other type of influence. It means that no man, no group, shall be allowed to become so powerful as to be able to hold other citizens at its mercy and impose its will upon them. It means that a share in the responsibilities of citizenship must involve, of necessity, a share in its benefits. It means that the right to the fullest possible development of self, the right to social justice, the right to human dignity, should never become the exclusive prerogative of a few. For, human nature being what it is, the will of this coterie will become law, inevitably; they will dominate the State and use its power for their own purpose; they will make their own desires the criterion of the public good.

In the second place, equality means that adequate opportunities, especially opportunities for the fullest development, should be laid open to all. I have said above that what makes a man different from his kind is, not his nature, but his individuality and the special gifts which mark off his personality - physical strength, intelligence above the ordinary, creative powers in the field of the arts, a special bent for certain skills, moral courage, and so forth,

In Nso, we have a saying that no man can tell, beforehand, what womb will bring forth a chief. If you enter a maternity and see a row of babies lying in their cots, you cannot say which will become what. Logic therefore demands that all these children should be given adequate and equal opportunities for education in order that each should develop his faculties to the fullest, in order that none of them, at the end of his days, should be laid to rest with his best self-unfulfilled; in order that genius may be brought to light and given the chance to blossom and bloom. For, obviously, we cannot discover the existence of capacity unless we create a system that provides for this discovery.

In brief, therefore, the basic conditions of equality are the provision of adequate opportunities for training, adequate opportunity of education, for all.

Today, our meagre resources do not allow us to provide this social right

to every citizen; the chance for full development goes to a lucky or privileged few. But it is a duty, an objective, to strive after. Step by step, we shall attain it someday.

Equality, therefore, does not mean that every man is like the other in all respects. That would contradict ordinary experience and evident acts. It means that, human nature being basically the same, human needs are basically the same and the basic human rights the same for all.

The Separation of Powers

We have already seen that the end of government is the welfare of the governed, that this welfare consists essentially in the enjoyment of certain rights – life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness – and that to promote and protect these rights men elect governments and invest these governments with authority.

What we want to see now is the nature of this authority, and how it should be exercised.

The authority of the State is threefold: firstly, the power to make laws, to lay down the general rules that must be followed to foster the welfare of the individual and of the community; secondly, the power to govern, the power to put the laws of the land into effect, the power to apply these laws to particular situations; thirdly, the power to judge and punish those who transgress the law; legislative power, executive power, judicial power, These threefold authority is embodied in the three, well-known public institutions: the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary; or, to use a more current terminology, Parliament, the Government and the Courts.

The main question we set out to answer in this article is this: Now that we have decided to work towards a one party State, what precautions must we take to make sure that democracy shall be preserved in that set-up?

Up to this, we have made answer that, in order to achieve this, we must build into our political system safeguards which will guarantee that all citizens shall be considered equal in the eyes of the state; that their rights shall never be trampled down, shall never be alienated, shall always be respected; that their essential freedoms shall be regarded as sacred; safeguard which will guarantee that every citizen shall be allowed to speak his mind without let or hindrance.

However, these guarantees will serve no purpose, will remain a dead letter, if no provision is made for an authority which shall see to it that they

are enforced.

This is where a highly indispensable principle comes in, namely, the principle of the Separation of Powers; the principle that legislative, executive and judicial authority should never be vested in the hands of one man or of one group of persons.

It is of course perfectly possible to conceive a state of things where these powers are wielded by one body or even by one person. Kings and chiefs did this in the olden days. Even a people as highly civilized and as democratic as the ancient Romans made provision in their constitution that, in times of extreme public danger, when the state was in imminent peril, all powers should be handed over, to a dictator whose word became law and whose orders were to be executed unquestioningly. Yet the experience of the ages proves (that some degree of separation of these powers is absolutely necessary if freedom is to survive.

Man, as we have seen, is, by his very nature, more inclined to cruelty than to kindness, more inclined to abuse than to use, to inordinateness than to moderation; he is thirsty for flattery, resentful of criticism, and gets drunk, very easily, with authority.

Therefore, if all powers are concentrated in the same hands, are you sure that the same man will make laws, enforce them, and then sit in judgement on himself and pass a verdict of guilty if, in that legislation and in that enforcement, he has acted unjustly?

Men are not angels and the accumulation of all powers in the hands of one man or of one body of men is the surest road to tyranny.

Power which is not shared, in some way, is, inevitably, bound to become absolute.

As we have seen already, authority is, by its very nature, very apt to go to the heads of those who wield it; and, to be exercised safely, it must be limited. And one effective way of limiting it is to share it among persons or bodies which will keep a watchful eye on each other, in order to check abuses.

Just one can say, without fear of being proved wrong that Britain, with all her faults – since nothing human is perfect – is the best-governed country in the world.

The British experience has shown that, although the legislative and the executive should be separated, this separation, however, should not be complete. That system works best where the government is, as it were, a committee of the assembly, that is, where the government is formed from

among the members of the assembly and is responsible to the assembly, and must lose office, when it loses the confidence of the assembly.

This system functions best where parliament contains two parties of adequate numerical strength, tried skill, intellectual ability and moral integrity. In this system, the government is always present in the assembly to answer for its acts and there, thanks to the bipartisan system, its doings are subjected to careful scrutiny and to organised criticism; from opponents skilled in government business and ready to take their place.

Such a system puts a government to the constant test and proves whether, in that government, there is talent and character. Such a system, where government is held up constantly to the public view, where there is organised criticism and careful scrutiny, is a veritable school; for, thanks to it, every member of government spends the early years of his career in touch with the operations he is destined to direct; and, in this way, he establishes contact with his job long before he comes to it.

Such then are the merits of the two-party system. But before the British reached this point, they had to pass through centuries of preparation, of experience, of trial and error. They can well afford its luxury today, because, although in their community the gap between those who have more and those who have less is still very wide, although their economic stem is not completely free from crises, poverty is almost gone and the basic needs of men are well provided for, by free and compulsory education, by free medical care and by other amenities of this kind.

In Africa, we are bogged down in penury and misery; our problems rise like staggering mountains on every side, our experience of government, on the modern pattern, goes back only a couple of years. The situation in which we are, at present, has been compared to a state of war, where exacting sacrifices are demanded from each citizen. The conclusion has been drawn that, if we want to enjoy, tomorrow, the advantages of the system that obtained at Westminster, we must give up some of its joys today, we must do less talking, more work, and invest, our governments with more authority, with greater facilities for speedy action; hence the one party, hence the list system, hence the presidential regime.

Yet the question must still be asked: How shall we do all this without becoming slaves?

Here I am arguing that one of the surest ways of doing this, of preserving freedom, is the separation of legislative executive and judicial powers. I have said that, with regard to the legislative and the executive, this separation need

not be total and complete: the government could be, as it were, a committee of the House and should sit in parliament for scrutiny and criticism.

But with the judiciary, that is, with the courts, the position is completely different.

The common idea about the judiciary is that it is there to judge and punish those who transgress the law and to settle disputes between private citizens. This view of the courts is incomplete; they have another duty which, in so far as the preservation of freedom is concerned, is of the very highest importance.

This function of the judiciary is to act like a watch-dog; to determine the manner in which the work of the government has been done, to see to it that, in the exercise of its powers, the government conforms to the fundamental principles of natural justice, to the general rules laid down by law. It has the right to declare that, in a particular case, the government, in its decision has exceeded its powers and, therefore, that the said decision is null and void.

The traditional picture of Justice is that of a blind-folded woman seated with a balance in the left hand and an up-lifted sword in the other. The Judiciary, therefore, is supposed to know nobody; for Justice is blind, and its whole purpose is impartiality. Before justice therefore, both the governed and the government are brought down to the same level. Thus, the idea of equality before the law is incomplete and defective, if it does not include this principles. Unless this principle is regarded as sacred the government will always have an overwhelming advantage against the private citizen; thus the ordinary man will be unable to defend his rights against those who shelter themselves beneath the cloak of the authority of the state.

For the survival of democracy, therefore, it is imperative that the principle of the supremacy of the Judiciary over the Executive should be enforced; the Government should be subordinate to the Courts in all points which concern the interpretation of law, in all cases where the judgment of the executive is questioned by a private citizen, there should be no organ of the executive exempt from judicial inspection; and the courts should have the power to declare null and void any decision which, in their view, has not been reached by sufficient inquiry; which is not backed up, therefore, by conclusive, objective evidence.

This doctrine that the judge is the task-master of the executive; that every executive act should be open to the scrutiny of the courts; that (their decisions should always be binding on the government; that, before the law,

the state must be put on a footing of equality with the ordinary citizen and must answer for its acts, is, to my mind, and in fact, the surest safeguard of democracy. There can be no setting aside of--this principle; any government which seeks ways and means to exempt itself from this obligation is unjust; any prerogative claimed by any executive to prevent citizens who have suffered wrong from getting redress, through the courts, is, by the very nature of things, null and void.

The doom of democracy is sealed, when a country reaches the stage, where a citizen, who has been the obvious victim of injustice, at the hands of an overbearing government, instead of appealing to the courts for protection and for the vindication of his rights, has to go down on his knees and plead for mercy, lest worse indignities and cruelties be heaped upon his head.

To avoid misunderstanding, one point must be made abundantly clear and it is this. Saying that the Executive should be subject to the Judiciary does not mean that the courts have any right to interfere, at will and on their own initiative, with government business. By no means! There must first be complaint from the citizen body before the courts step in. But when the executive is proved to be in the wrong, it should have no authority whatsoever to set aside the verdict of the courts.

If the government is not satisfied, the matter should be settled finally by Parliament. For, although the Legislature too should not dictate to the courts, it has the right, within limits, where it is convinced that the verdict is at variance with principle, to over-rule the decision of the courts. Since precedent, especially in very serious cases, acquires the force of law, such an action, on the part of the Legislature, prevents a wrong precedent from becoming established.

If all this is to be, it follows that the judge must be deeply learned, highly competent, widely experienced, mature in heart and mind, and of a character that is absolutely unimpeachable.

Furthermore, one other principle, concerning the judge, is absolutely necessary: he must be untouchable, that is, he must be highly respected, regarded almost sacred, and his position must be the securest in the land. It is important that the judge should enjoy complete freedom in his office and should not be hampered in the performance of his duties by fear of, or by attacks from, the government.

His position should be secure against wanton dismissal. The principle should be that a judge shall not be removed, unless his health is so bad that he cannot perform his duties or he is proved corrupt.

A judge is a friendless man who walks a lonely road, the road traced out by truth and justice; for, sometimes, his verdicts will arouse the anger of the government, sometimes his decisions will make him unpopular with the people. But all this is besides the point, is completely irrelevant.

What is to the point, what is important is that the principle should be firmly established that a judge shall never incur a penalty or suffer, in anyway, when he does the right as he sees the right. Unless this is so, and unless he welcomes martyrdom rather than betray his trust, he is bound to become a tool of the whims of those in power or the creature of the passing whiffs of public emotion.

A judge, as we have seen, must be impartial, must be guided solely by the principles of justice, by the facts of each case, and by the logic inherent in those facts and principles. For this, we have said that, not only should judges be independent of the executive, but that they must have authority over the government in the special field of law.

To further this impartiality and strengthen this independence, judges must be further isolated from one very dangerous and corrupting influence, namely, politics. If civil servants are required to be neutral in politics, the principle is more imperative still in the case of judges.

Judges should be appointed solely by reason of their learning in the law, their integrity, their maturity, their depth of experience.

On no account should appointment to judicial office be made the reward for services to a political party.

From this it follows that lawyers who are members of political parties or of an assembly or of a government should not be eligible for a place on the bench. For, such persons will come into office already with a bias in favour of their political friends and, instead of scrutinising scrupulously the actions of the executive, they will be tempted so to interpret the law as to make things easier for their comrades in the government.

On the other hand, judges should not be allowed to run for political office. If a member of the bench nourishes ambitions for a seat in the House or for a place in the government, there will be a strong temptation, on his part, in the performance of his duties, to court the favour of the party most likely to help him to realise his dreams.

The more completely judges and courts are separated and isolated from politics, the better shall be their quality, the surer their independence, the clearer their perception.

Let me finish this section of this article by asking a question; What is it

that makes a people stand out as cultured, in the truest and deepest sense of culture? Is it a high degree of scientific achievement? Is it abundance of worldly wealth?

The Americans, for example, as we all know, are so rich and have attained such a height in scientific development that they are on their way to the moon. Yet, among them, there is so much wanton violence, so many trigger-happy gun-men that a young and promising president could be cut down, in broad day-light, like so much pork. There, there are millions of citizens who know that, however lofty may be their height of personal and intellectual competence, however elevated their degree of moral merit, certain offices in the state are closed to them, hermetically, and forever, because of their race. And yet, if democracy and equality mean anything, they must mean that any citizen, whatsoever, shall be free to run, without let or hindrance, for any office, whatever it may be, if he is fit for it. There, in spite of their glorious constitution, the vote has been refused, in certain states, to black men; to the extent that, whoever among them dared to attempt to exercise this most elementary of all democratic rights, did so at the risk of his neck. There a Negro, facing a white jury, knows, beforehand, that his chances of even-handed justice are slim. All this is amply witnessed by American history.

The dread in which the world lives today, lest knowledge of nuclear secrets should fall into irresponsible hands, is a testimony to the truth that, in culture, there is something higher than the highest achievement in the discovery of the most hidden and stupendous secrets of the physical world. Science and worldly wealth are of tremendous and overwhelming importance for the progress of man. Yet, they are like a razor in the hands of a baby, where citizens are not drilled in the curbing of their restive, wayward passions, where they are not schooled in self-restraint, in putting into scrupulous and impartial practice the principles of social justice, in giving to the commonest, humblest and weakest member of the community his due, regardless of his race, colour and creed.

Without the practice of justice, solemn-sounding constitutions, however perfect on paper, are just so much humbug.

What then is the surest test of a civilized and cultured people? A writer has answered this question better than I ever could do.

“The importance of the judiciary in political construction,” said I, “is rather profound than prominent. On the one hand, in popular discussion

of forms and changes of Government, the judicial organ often drops out of sight; on the other hand, in determining a nation's rank in political civilisation, no test is more decisive than the degree in which justice, as defined by the law, is actually realised in its judicial administration, both as between one private citizen and another, and as between private citizens and members of the government”

Before proceeding any further, it would be helpful to restate in brief what I have been labouring to convey up to this.

The thesis I have defended is that the thing that all human beings seek in everything they do or pursue, the end of all human endeavour, is happiness or felicity, internal satisfaction, mental tranquillity, peace of soul; that, to achieve this end, men have been endowed with certain rights which no power on earth may take away; that to assist in the attainment of this end, to further and protect these rights, governments are established among men; that the form of government best calculated to fulfil this purpose is democracy and that, for democratic government to exist and survive, there must be freedom of expression, the rule of law, equality of citizenship and the separation of powers; and, therefore, that the first duty of the leaders, who have now come together to create a solid, healthy West Cameroon, is to build a state firmly based on these fundamental, democratic principles.

To leave the reader with a clearer idea of what democratic rule ought to be, I can do no better than put before you that beautiful description that was given of the constitution of the Athens of his day (the fount and origin of all democracy) by Pericles, in the famous funeral oration, which he pronounced, over the Athenian slain, at the beginning of the Peloponnesian War. And, as you read his words and mark how fresh they sound, remember that they were uttered 400 years before Christ, that is, well over some 2,000 years ago. Speaking in praise of the institutions of his native city, this is what he said:

“We ...have organised our State in such a way that it is perfectly well able to look after itself both in peace and in war

“Let me say that our system of government does not copy the institutions of our neighbours. It is more the case of our being a model to others, than of our imitating anyone else. Our constitution is called a democracy because power is in the hands not of a minority but of the whole people. When it is a question of settling private disputes, everyone is equal before the law; when it is a question of putting one person before

another in positions of public responsibility, what counts is not membership of a particular class, but the actual ability which the man possesses. No one, so long as he has it in him to be of service to the state, is kept in political obscurity because of poverty. And, just as our political life is free and open, so is our day-today life in our relations with each other. We do not get into a state with our next-door neighbour if he enjoys himself in his own way, nor do we give him the kind of black looks which, though they do no real harm, still do hurt people's feelings. We are free and tolerant in our private lives; but in public affairs we keep to the law. This is because it commands our deep respect.

“We give our obedience to those whom we put in positions of authority, and we obey the laws themselves, especially those which are for the protection of the oppressed, and those unwritten laws which it is an acknowledged shame to break....

“Here each individual is interested not only in his own affairs but the affairs of the state as well: even those who are mostly occupied with their own business are extremely well-informed on general politics - this is a peculiarity of ours: we do not say that a man who takes no interest in politics is a man who minds his own business; we say that he has no business here at all. We Athenians, in our own persons, take our decisions on policy or submit them to proper discussions; for we do not think that there is an incompatibility between words and deeds; the worst thing is to rush into action before the consequences have been properly debated. And this is another point where we differ from other people. We are capable at the same time of taking risks and of estimating them beforehand. Others are brave out of ignorance; and, when they stop to think, they begin to fear. But the man who can most truly be accounted brave is he who best knows the meaning of what is sweet in life and of what is terrible, and then goes out undeterred to meet what is to come....

“Taking everything together then, I declare that our city is an education to Greece, and I declare that in my opinion each single one of our citizens, in all the manifold aspects of life, is able to show himself the rightful lord and owner of his own person, and do this, moreover with exceptional grace and exceptional versatility.”

The Material Side

In the fore-going pages, I have endeavoured to show, that the first and essential task, to which our reunited leadership must address themselves, today, is the creation and the consolidation of a democratic State.

They have a second duty, as important as the first, namely, to procure for the people the highest material well-being possible; that is, to create the conditions in which every citizen can win, without too much hardship, the things that he needs to maintain his life - food, clothing, shelter, the soundness of physical health.

In order to provide this welfare, the government has to develop, to the utmost, our vegetable, animal and mineral resources in order to keep their quality and quantity ever on the rise; they must promote science and technology in order to equip the greatest number of citizens possible with those modern skills so necessary to accelerate the speed of economic development and the attainment of social welfare; they must ensure fair and even distribution of material wealth, provide ever-increasing opportunities of employment and take adequate measures to wipe out, as far as possible, from the minds of the citizens, the fear that they will be without help in times of illness or neglected in their old age.

I have also said that man attains happiness by realising his best self, by self-fulfilment. That man would be most satisfied who, in life, was quick to discover his physical, intellectual, moral or artistic talents and was able to develop and exercise them to the fullest possible.

For this, I say, two things are absolutely necessary, namely, a democratic setting, an atmosphere of freedom, on the one hand, and, on the other, ample material means of livelihood. No genius, however fertile, can blossom and bloom in a strait-jacket environment plagued with fear; full bodily, mental or creative development is impossible where people wallow in misery. For the full self-realisation of man, democracy and material prosperity must march hand in hand, must live side by side. In fact, the link between them is so intimate that one can assert, categorically, that democratic government is one of the most effective means of promoting material prosperity.

For no government which depends on universal suffrage for its life can afford to be thoughtless and negligent of people's needs; it knows that if discontent arises and spreads, it cannot survive for long. Thus, in a democracy, there is constant pressure on the government to raise living standards, not only with regard to income, but also as regards education,

health, housing, and security against accident, illness and old age. But rulers who know that nobody can remove them from office, can afford to mock at the people's misery and further their private interests instead of the public welfare.

That we need to produce abundant wealth, in order to secure the well-being of our citizens, is a question so obvious that we do not need to linger over it. But the problem of how to develop our resources, on what system to base the distribution of our wealth in such wise that every citizen gets a fair share is a question which needs careful examination.

I will start with a familiar example.

A Concrete Case

Suppose the plantations now run by the C. D. C. extended throughout the whole of West Cameroon; suppose that you had acres and acres of land covered with palm, rubber, banana, cocoa, pepper, tea and coffee, not only in Victoria and Kumba, but also in Mamfe, Bamenda, Wum and Nkambe.

Suppose further that these vast estates, with their thousands of acres and hundreds of thousands of workers, were the property not of government, as now, but of a single family, or of a single, close-knit, exclusive group.

What would be the outcome?

The direct result would be that extensive portions of Cameroon land would fall under the control of a handful of men.

All the massive produce yielded yearly by these estates would be the property of this one family, of this coterie.

All the enormous wealth made from the export of this produce will belong to them as well; and you can be sure that, human greed being as strong as we know, they will keep the bulk of this wealth for themselves and pay a pittance to the workers in wages.

Thanks to this tremendous capital, they will invest in other fields; and, before long, not only our agricultural enterprise, but our animal and mineral resources, our industries and our various sources of energy will be in the hands of this exclusive group.

With all our internal resources and our export trade securely in their hands, the complete take-over, by them, of our import trade would be a matter of course, so that the whole of our commerce would be in their hands.

Having thus secured for themselves the monopoly over our entire

economy, the seizure of the banks, by them, would be a simple walk over.

You would think that with land, agriculture, herding, animal husbandry, mining, industry, commerce, energy and banking firmly in their grasp, they would now sit back and relax and enjoy themselves and rest satisfied. By no means! Something absolutely essential will still be outside their control, namely, political power. And, as long as this eludes their grip, they can have no restful nights. For there will always be, lurking in the offing, the possibility of another group or even the people themselves rising up to challenge this state of things.

You can therefore be sure that they will certainly not leave politics alone; they will seize power in order to make sure that only laws favourable to themselves are made; in order to control the government and the courts. Indeed, they will also take over education in order to screen out carefully from the curricula any idea that the established system was wrong, in order to shape men's minds to accept the status quo.

Suppose further that this all-powerful exclusive group was composed not of Cameroonians but of foreigners, what would be the result?

Worse would happen.

In addition to this economic and political spoliation of the people, financial haemorrhage would set in; and our country would be continually drained of its income, without a corresponding equivalent being brought in. This can cripple a nation for ever. If all the mineral wealth of a country, for instance, is exploited and carted off to enrich the stranger, the only thing that is left behind, when all is gone, is a hole in the ground!

Furthermore, in addition to our government being a tool in the hands of a few, it will now receive its orders from abroad and our independence will be gone.

From all what I have said, it is clear that the concentration of a nation's wealth in the hands of a few is a disaster for any state: it divides the country into two hostile groups, a rich and well-fed handful on the one hand, and the poor and famished masses on the other; it wipes out all equality, it establishes the rule of the few; it is the death of democracy – a situation with a highly charged explosive within its breast.

There can be no escape, therefore, from this eternal, iron rule, the experience of mankind since the world began, namely, that whoever owns your land, whoever owns your resources, will make your laws and control your destinies and your lives.

“... great inequalities of wealth,” urged Professor Harold Laski, “make impossible the attainment of freedom. It means the dictation of the physical and mental circumstances which surround the less fortunate. It means the control of the engines of government to their detriment. The influence of the great corporations upon the legislative system of the United States is only a supreme example of that control. Hardly less deleterious is the way in which it controls the intellectual environment it encounters. It is able to weight the educational system in its interest. It is able, by the rewards it offers, to affect the propertyless brain-worker to its service. Since the judiciary will be largely selected from its paid advocates, legal decisions will largely reflect the lessons of its experience. Even the Churches will preach a gospel which is permeated by their dependence upon the support of the wealthy.

“Political equality, therefore, is never real unless it is accompanied by virtual economic equality.”

There can be only one logical conclusion from all this. It is that if political equality is to be real, if democracy is to survive, what some have aptly called the commanding heights of the economy – land, vast plantations, mineral wealth, big and heavy industry, large-scale trade, transport and communications, banking and insurance, in brief, any enterprise so extensive that its ownership would entail, automatically, the wielding of tremendous power – must be owned and controlled and run government.

The Reasons Why

There are cogent reasons for this.

We saw, a moment ago the political argument that this is necessary for the preservation of equality and democratic government; we saw that power follows wealth: that he who controls vast fortunes will, as surely as night follows day, wield a deal of power; while he who owns nothing will be despoiled even of the right to share in the shaping of his own destiny.

There is another argument equally irrefutable, based on fact, the fact that, in Africa, there is no capital in private hands. On the whole of the black continent, there is hardly one African or one group of Africans capable of raising and running a large-scale enterprise completely on their own resources.

This situation is the outcome of historical circumstances.

In Europe, for centuries, before the coming of the socialist revolution, the theory and the practice that obtained were that kings kept the peace and ruled and left economic enterprise entirely in the hands of private citizens. Those of these citizens, who had the means and the skill, organised themselves into companies and obtained charters from their rulers and did flourishing business at home and abroad, and heaped up wealth and created banks.

Then came the age of the great explorations and discoveries, first Africa, then the New World. These companies fitted out expeditions, established themselves in the new-found lands and did a flourishing trade, and exploited mines and plantations and waxed ever wealthier.

The colonization and the exploitation of America and the Indies, as we all know, brought about the Slave Trade. And the flower of the African manhood was carried away to work the mines and the plantations, while millions of black men perished in the wars, in the barracoons, in the savageries that were perpetrated on them on the high seas and in the atrocities of the American slave system. And, in the New World, the despoiled Africans toiled to pile up more wealth for the European owners of the colonies, of the mines and the plantations, of the shipping companies and of the banks.

The day came when the American colonies themselves awoke to the injustice of the system of which they too were the victims; they wrung their independence from Britain and called a halt to a regime whereby their resources were being drained to fatten Europe; thus they saved their fabulous wealth for themselves and are today vying for the leadership of the world.

So in Europe and in America, wealth was heaped up, year after year, decade after decade, century after century – in private hands. Thus, when the machines came, these hoarders of vast fortunes were able to buy or make machines and, thereby, to multiply their wealth a millionfold.

Meanwhile, during those centuries, when Africa's resources were carted away, when the best of her manhood was carried off or butchered what did the European slave traders give in return for this staggering, unprecedented spoliation? They did not give back money or gold or precious stones or any wealth that was lasting or productive of more. They gave in return things that perish in the using, cloth and spirits and powder and arms for more slaughter and slaves,

And no sooner was an end made of the period of slavery, than a second rape of Africa began, with the era of colonial exploitation.

There you see why today Africa has no piled-up capital whatsoever, public or private.

When you consider this situation, not merely at the Cameroon level, but on an all-African, continental scale, you will get an idea of what an abysmal catastrophe it is. Think of the enormous amounts of mineral wealth produced in Africa every year, and yet, the continent continues to wallow in misery, because all but the whole of this fortune is carried away to enrich the stranger.

If we are to wait until individual Africans can produce the capital necessary for development, we will have to wait till the end of time. If the whole of this capital comes directly from foreign sources, these foreign sources, as we have seen, will grab political power and grind us down and make us slaves forever.

Therefore, if our resources are to be developed in such a way that democracy will be preserved and independence guaranteed, only one power should provide the necessary capital, only one authority should own and exploit and control and run our resources – government. There is no other way out, no half measures – Africa must go thoroughly socialist or remain forever fallen. If we cannot do this, then we should stop fussing and whining and surrender ourselves peacefully to be slaves forever.

There are various obvious reasons for the assertion that only government can furnish the capital Africa needs for her economic development and social welfare.

Firstly, only government can raise revenue within the country.

Secondly, only government, by establishing peaceful, stable rule, and thus creating a climate propitious to unhampered development, can inspire confidence in the foreign powers with capital to lend.

Thirdly, these foreign powers with fortunes to spare would more readily lend their unused wealth to firm, stable, lucid, dynamic governments than to private individuals; for they would be far surer of recovering their money from the former than from the latter; and this because such a government assures continuity of authority and progress and constitutes, by its very being and by its need to inspire international confidence, a living pledge that this money will be paid back, however long it takes.

There is no doubt in my mind whatsoever that the system of economic development made categorically imperative for Africa by the brute facts, by the state in which history has placed us, by the very nature of things, is socialism: the system whereby the means of production – land, capital,

property – are owned and controlled by the community as a whole, through their government, and are administered and distributed in the interests of all.

In so far as material well-being is concerned, therefore, the final end at which every African government should aim, even if it takes us centuries to get there, is the Welfare State: the State that puts socialist principles into effect, in order to ensure the well-being of all who live on it; the State that strives to improve conditions of living for the poorer classes, with the set purpose of achieving ultimate economic equality for all its citizens.

From a past, marred by centuries of relentless exploitation, independent Africa has inherited a legacy of misery, poverty, disease and illiteracy and each state has to grapple with the overwhelming problem of economic development and reorganisation, of modernising agriculture, commerce and industry, finance, education, communications, housing and the health services. With no capital in private indigenous African hands, with the need to preserve our hard-won independence, it is hard to see how this prodigious task can be accomplished without the institution of socialism. I see no other way out. Industrialization, the diversification and mechanisation of agriculture and national planning, based on the public ownership of the means of production and distribution, must become the order of the day.

As I have stressed, again and again, if we are to preserve our independence and further the firm establishment of democratic government, one of the first and fundamental aims of our economic development must be to free our resources from alien control, to protect our people from unbridled exploitation by foreign monopoly interests. This can effectively be done only by bringing the major means of production, distribution and exchange under the ownership and the control of the State.

Furthermore, I have also said that in order to raise capital for development, the empty-handed African governments will have no choice but to borrow from abroad. To remain free, they will have to make their field of borrowing as wide as possible. If they limit this field to a particular bloc, they will become too dependent on that bloc and will thereby impose upon themselves restrictions that will mar our economic growth. They must be able to trade with any country capable of supplying our needs.

The policy firmly laid down and enforced should be that, in no sector of the economy shall exclusive rights of operation, in respect of any commodity, be conferred on any single person or monopoly group, and that all enterprises shall accept the economic policy of the government as the basis of their activity and shall operate within the framework of the laws of the

land.

Such then is the economic system imperative for the development and the freedom of Africa. But one misunderstanding must be dissipated before I go ahead.

I do not mean, by anything I have said, that the State should own every single thing and that the individual citizen should own nothing at all. By no means. Room must be made for the exercise of personal talent and initiative; there should be small-scale business enterprises and holdings in private hands. The principle I stand for is that no single person, no single group should be allowed to own so much property that it can become the wielder of too much power capable of dictating its will to the government to the detriment of the public welfare; that, for the well-being and the freedom of all, the commanding heights of the economy – large-scale enterprises, the major means of production and distribution – should (be held and exploited and controlled and managed by the State.

The Hurdles

But staggering obstacles bar the way to the establishment of this system; before socialism can be achieved very high hurdles must be cleared first, as I have pointed out already, there is lack of African capital. Prominent among those that follow are lack of scientific knowledge, lack of technological know-how, lack of skill in the organisation and the management of large-scale enterprises, lack of honesty and character among the Africans.

Lack of native capital in Africa makes the intervention of foreign capital in our economy, in one way or the other, absolutely necessary.

Some African governments, to solve this problem, allow alien business companies to set up concerns and industries in their country and own them completely and run them as they like; and all the benefit that the indigenous peoples get out of these concerns comes in the form of taxes to the State and wages to the workers. Considering what we have said about the threat that foreign ownership of large-scale enterprises on our soil constitutes to our independence, this form of alien intervention in our economy must be rejected out of hand, *a priori*.

A second one, that is salutary to some extent, is partnership, between the indigenous government and foreign business companies in the exploitation of our resources. But, for this to be really healthy, some fundamental principles must be respected. Firstly, the African government should have a

preponderant and controlling share in the undertaking, within the framework of an agreement which secures the interests of the alien partner. Secondly, from the very start, the business company should resign itself to, and formally accept the principle of, a final complete take-over by the African government. The African government should pledge its word that this shall be done step by step and that, in the process, its capitalist companion shall receive adequate compensation. Thirdly, to facilitate the final take-over of such concerns and the creation of African capital, the alien partners should agree to sell their shares gradually to the government and to invest an increasing portion of their profits in the African country.

The healthiest form of foreign intervention in our economic development, in my view, is that whereby the government borrows money from abroad and, with the aid of this capital, sets up industries and other enterprises and owns them and runs them itself for the people's welfare. For this, it is absolutely necessary for the State to inspire confidence abroad by firm, stable and democratic government at home. Without this, foreign moneylenders will be scared away. That is why those who stir up animosity and warring factions within the country are, in a very real sense, among the worst enemies of the State.

With regard to scientific knowledge, technological know-how and skill in large-scale business organisation and management, we know that these are almost non-existent among us. For a long time to come, we shall be forced to go abroad, not only to borrow foreign capital, but to borrow foreign brains into the bargain. And, so long as we depend both on foreign minds and on foreign money to run our affairs, we shall never be able to achieve anything worthwhile. The imperative need, therefore, to give priority to science, technology and management, in our award of scholarships, in the organisation of our colleges and universities, cannot be over-emphasised.

An enterprise like the C.D.C., for instance, should know how many scientists, researchers, technologists, technicians and managers it needs to run what it has and to expand over a number of years, and should draw up a comprehensive plan for their formation. The same holds good for every other corporation and government department. Unless this is done, the organisation of our education system will never be rational and the award of scholarships will remain, for a long time, the haphazard and slipshod affair it is at present. Some time ago, a secular went out from the Presidency to all ministers and secretaries of state demanding that each should carry out a survey of its needs in trained personnel for the next ten years or so, I stand to

be corrected, but to my knowledge, only the Department of Agriculture has done that so far.

The absolute need for sterling qualities in the character of citizens called upon to create and run a socialist state is a question so clear and obvious that it does not need to be dwelt upon.

For you may have all the capital you need, all the skill in science, technology and management, but if your citizens are not honest, responsible and dedicated to the public weal, your socialist system must end in disaster.

If we adopt socialism and are serious about it, we must pay particular attention to our education system. It must put the formation of character high on its list of priorities: it must instil discipline, honesty devotion to duty, a high sense of civic responsibility; it must create that mentality whereby a citizen who betrays his country or misuses public funds is looked upon as a monstrosity, a leper to be shunned and despised.

But since no human community, whatever we do, will ever become a communion of saints, since no state will ever be without its share of crooks, a fool-proof system of checks and controls should be established to detect graft and corruption; and those caught and found guilty should be treated with inexorable severity.

Furthermore, I am convinced that management of economic affairs should be left to the scientist and the economic expert, should be divorced, as far as possible from politics. To make membership of boards which are called to sit upon highly technical and complicated questions, a reward for party hacks is the most illogical and ridiculous policy imaginable. It can only lead to ruin. Give to the experts the main outlines of the government's economic policy and leave them alone to carry on their job within that general framework.

Capital, skill and character – with these, there is well-founded hope that a socialised economy will yield good and lasting results –results in real independence, in political equality, in the consolidation of democratic government, in more and more social amenities.

But the establishment of socialism, by the very nature of things, is not something that can be done over-night; it requires minute and thorough preparation, care in application, years of patient trial and error. If it is introduced without due, expert preparation and with needless haste, the chaos and the disasters that may result may be so severe as to cause the pendulum to swing dangerously back and far into reaction. The essential thing is to accept the ideology, to digest its principles thoroughly, to plan

carefully for it to draw an economic programme based on its theses, and to implement that programme step by step, firmly and surely, even if slowly.

The word socialism may sound new and foreign in some West Cameroonians ears. And yet the beginnings of a socialist system already exist among us. For, the rulers of West Cameroon, right from colonial times to these, have all been committed to public participation in the exploitation of our resources, to the ownership and the management of enterprises by government: witness, the CDC, the Development Agency, the Electricity Corporation, the Cameroon Bank. Now that the principle and the practice are already established in West Cameroon, albeit at an embryonic stage, what we have to do to set the system on a firm scientific and philosophical basis is by defining clearly, as I have tried to do in this article, the doctrine on what it should be based; to extend it farther afield and make it more thorough-going and to set ourselves, right from now, to train, for each department, the cadres, the qualified personnel, that will bring into the exploitation of our resources, thought, skill and honesty.

The Ideology of Tomorrow's World

In a former article, I said that the time has come in this country for ideological politics, politics based on a doctrine, on a cogent and coherent set of well-defined principles; a political philosophy which will serve as a standard or a norm for judging the soundness of political decisions and actions; a doctrine to which we should refer for political enlightenment, in specific problems, just as Christians refer to the Bible or to the catechism.

In the present article I have endeavoured to formulate such a doctrine, to propose to our political leaders a philosophy for practical action, to put before you my political credo.

In this creed there are two articles; I believe in Democracy, in government of the people, for the people by the people, in government based on equality, on respect of rights, on freedom of speech, on the rule of law, on the separation of powers, on the supremacy of the judiciary over the executive; I believe in Socialism, in the doctrine that the commanding heights of the economy, the major means of production, distribution and exchange, should be held by the State, should be exploited and administered for the common welfare.

I have shown how intimately, how inextricably these two are wedded together. Where there is universal suffrage, where there are free elections,

where a government can be pilloried by its citizens and rejected at the polls, it will assiduously work to win and retain the love of its people by promoting their material welfare. Where wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few, democracy and freedom are doomed; for power follows wealth and the few in whose hands they concentrate will use the State for their own private purposes, completely regardless of the common weal.

Socialism, therefore, has a twofold primordial purpose: firstly, to establish and preserve real equality freedom and democracy; secondly, to provide social amenities for all, to set up the Welfare State.

Generally, any political ideology has a name by which it is known. What name, then, do we give to this one that I have endeavoured to delineate in this article, this intimate blending of democracy and socialism?

It is no new-fangled theory concocted by my imagination. Anybody that has read wide must have met with it, somewhere or other: it is aptly known as Democratic Socialism, It is the brand of socialism preached and practised by Labour Parties in Britain and in Scandinavia, for example.

When I observe political and economic trends all over the earth today, it is increasingly borne in upon me that Democratic Socialism is the world ideology of tomorrow.

Ideologically, the globe is divided into two principal blocs: on the one hand, there is the Western World which is predominantly capitalist in economic orientation and organisation, where there is still a great deal of economic inequality among the citizens, but where a certain measure of democracy exists, thanks to universal adult suffrage and to the bipartisan system; on the other hand, you have the Eastern Bloc, typified by Russia and China, where a materialist socialism was installed at the point of the gun, and where a rigid dictatorship of the working classes or the proletariat has been imposed on the people. In the one bloc, there is a measure of democracy without socialism; in the other, there is a totalitarian socialism devoid of democracy.

But observation shows that, in the capitalist countries socialist principles are gaining ground while, in the communist states, the authorities are being forced to relax their iron hold, albeit grudgingly; and democracy is inching its way along surely if slowly.

In the West, it is in Scandinavia that Democratic Socialism has made the longest strides. In September 1965, for instance, Labour lost power in Norway after having been in office for thirty years on end. There the Welfare State is so advanced that it is beginning to dawn upon its Scandinavian

beneficiaries and upon outside observers that material well-being, after all, is not the final end of life; it is there that the general standard of living, all round, has reached the highest point in the world; and yet, it has been noticed that, the more amenities increased and life becomes easier, the higher rises the yearly incidence of things like suicide and mental derangement.

In Britain, from the morrow of the Second World War, Labour pushed through many socialist measures, like the health service, for example, and certain socialist principles have become part and parcel of the British system to such an extent that, even if the Tories were swept into office tomorrow, they would be powerless to reverse them. In almost all countries in the world, today, planning, which formerly was rejected by conservatives as a socialist innovation, is now recognised as a healthy economic necessity. Even in the United States, where capitalism waxes rankest, a few socialist principles are making successful inroads; witness the recent health legislation passed by the Johnson administration in favour of the aged. The fact that, even in America, big business cannot just do as it likes today, was proved by the clash between the steel industry and the late President Kennedy. Steel' wanted to put up their prices; the President deemed that this was not in the public interest, and opposed the measure; and, in the showdown that ensued, it was the steel barons who knuckled under, not the White House.

In the Eastern countries, consequent on the upheavals which took place in Poland and in Hungary in 1956 and consequent on Khrushchev's onslaught on Stalin, totalitarianism has been inching back before the gradual advance of democracy; the communist bosses in these countries are learning that you cannot keep a people in a strait-jacket, with their neck under an iron heel, forever. In some of these states atheism has yielded to religious freedom to the extent of sitting down at the negotiating table with the Vatican, under Pope John XXIII. Notice how things have moved in Russia since Stalin. When Joe Stalin fell out with his collaborators, he put them to death; he pursued Trotsky and got him, at last, even in exile across the seas. When Khrushchev overthrew his rivals, he sent them to work in distant parts of the country. But when Kosygin and Co. got rid of Khrushchev, they pensioned him off and allowed him the liberty of a private citizen right in Moscow itself. Today we are witnessing a state of things where Russia and the United States are chumming up against Red China.

The goal may still be far away and out of sight, but I believe there I sample evidence that the totalitarian states are edging on, grudgingly but inexorably, towards democracy; and that the capitalist countries are

advancing steadily towards control of the economy by the state. I do not believe that any power on this earth can put the hands of this clock back. I believe firmly that, however long it may take, the day will come when democracy and socialism will meet and blend, when Democratic Socialism will be the ideology of the world.

Socialism Inevitable In Africa

I am pleading that the logic of the facts of our case demands that we should embrace this philosophy, a socialist economy. But there is every likelihood that what I have expounded will be dismissed as irrelevant, airy nonsense; I will be lightly brushed aside as someone with his head high up in the clouds out of touch with the facts on the earth. My head may be in the clouds, but as a student of the evolution of human history, I claim that my feet are firmly planted on the ground.

For, looking at the unfolding of the story of the world, of mankind, I am consoled by one firm and fervent conviction, namely, that, in Africa, Socialism will come whether we accept it or reject it, whether we like it or not. I am urging that we should be wise, in time, and do all that lies in our power to make it come by peace. If we don't, it will come all the same; but it will come by war. But come, it must.

Back in the nineteen-thirties, when we sang Rule Britannia, and trooped around the Union Jack and listened to eulogies of the "empire on which the sun never sets," who would have believed that, in a question of a quarter of a century thence, Africa would have thrown off a yoke that looked so formidable, so unshakable, so surely and firmly riveted? But, by the middle fifties, the long disarmed and emasculated African was everywhere up on his feet resolved to be a slave no more.

If a less enlightened generation could accomplish this, how can we sit back complacently and expect that the hundreds of thousands who are being turned out, year after year, from school, college and university, with all their strength of numbers, with all their strength of will, with all their strength of mind, will willingly prostrate themselves, forever, before a situation of inequality, of social injustice, of luxury for the few and misery for the many?

The first African revolution was political and was aimed against the stranger. The one that is coming will be economic and will settle scores between the Africans themselves.

It is therefore keen-sighted wisdom to foresee and forestall, and establish

by peace, what, otherwise, must come by blood.

Socialism and Communism

For some time now, in certain circles, there has been a covert campaign of denigration against me. It is whispered that I am a communist. Normally, then, I should expect that, after an article in which I take my stand, unequivocally, for socialism, my detractors will take to the overt pulpit.

And yet, all what I have written, up to this, is plain enough and straightforward; and anybody, who has read my articles carefully, will testify that nowhere in them is there any statement against justice, freedom or religion.

Those who do this whispering are either ignorant or in obvious bad faith. And, in either case, they stand condemned; for they are supposed to be men of high education, men whose lives are supposed to be entirely dedicated to truth, charity and justice.

At any rate, let them know that we are not here in the United States and that, even there, Senator Joe McCarthy is long since dead, buried and completely discredited. The times are gone when you could set fellows quaking by pointing a finger at them and crying communist. Today, on the contrary, it is the witch-hunter who cuts a shabby figure, who shows himself up as a ludicrous anachronism.

St. Augustine said, “Qui bene distinguit, bene docet;” he who makes clear distinctions is a good teacher. And one would expect those who are charged to teach and who are supposed to be followers of St. Augustine to know the difference between communism and democratic socialism.

Communism is a materialistic philosophy of life which advocates a dictatorship of the proletariat, that is, the imposition of government by the working classes, in all countries of the world, by violent revolution or by any means which may be deemed necessary, in order, ultimately, to arrive at and maintain a classless society, in which there shall be no private ownership, and in which all material resources shall be owned and exploited by the state, and shall be administered for the common good, by a centralised body of workers’ representatives. From the above definition, some salient and fundamental differences emerge between the two ideologies.

Firstly, communism is materialistic, therefore atheist; it denies God and mocks at religion – as an opium which, instead of galvanising you to fight for your rights, on this earth, lulls you to sleep by promising you “a pie in the sky, when you die.”

On the contrary, democratic socialism, by its very definition and vocation, is committed to respect freedom of worship, since this freedom is one of the fundamental liberties of the democratic system. In Britain, Labour has a numerous Catholic and Protestant following.

Secondly, communism, founded, as it is, on the dialectic materialism of Marx, teaches that warfare between classes, between the haves and the have-nots, belongs to the very nature of human society and, thus consequently, communism is bent on achieving its objectives by violence.

Nothing could be farther than this from the intentions of democratic socialism; it seeks to further its tenets and to achieve its ends through peace, through the ballot box, through the consent of the people. If there is a saner political doctrine than this, I would like to know which.

Our Special Mission

I said at the start of this essay that, if this union is to survive and succeed, if it is to gather strength, from day to day, and reinforce itself, the West Cameroon leaders now standing as a team must be fired by an ardent, lofty purpose, which, like a cleansing flame will burn out from their minds and hearts all low intentions, all self-seeking, all disruptive tendencies.

As I have pointed out, we already have, in common with all rising countries especially, such a noble objective, namely, the construction of a new nation, the creation, almost out of nothing, of those moral and material conditions necessary for each citizen to attain the highest measure of happiness possible by developing his faculties and natural endowments to the utmost. These conditions, as I have said at length, are the establishment of democratic government, on sound and lasting basis, and the creation, even if gradual, of the welfare state.

But history, as I have never ceased to proclaim, has invested us with another special mission equally lofty, which gives us a unique position in all Africa

It is to lead the way, by means of our reunification, to ultimate African Unity. By virtue of this history-making mission, Cameroon with only 5 million inhabitants can offer to Africa something which Nigeria, with 55 million, cannot give. But unfortunately, either because we are not so noisy, or, worse, because we lack breadth of understanding, because we lack vision, enthusiasm, conviction and faith in this mission, our voice does not ring through Africa with resounding note with which it would otherwise.

I am convinced that, if we understood more profoundly what unity means to Africa, we would appreciate more deeply, more keenly, the magnitude and the unspeakable importance of the Cameroon enterprise.

African Unity

I have said ad nauseam that democracy and the welfare state should be the fundamental objectives of African political endeavour. But, when you look at the situation more closely, taking one thing with another, it is borne in upon you that, without the strength that comes from unity, the black man shall win neither free government nor the welfare state.

For some time now, I have been a diligent student of the black man's – voices; I have read everything that I could find on slavery and imperialist colonialism, because these subjects had an intimate bearing on the thesis I wrote for my doctorate; and I am convinced that, if African leaders keep ever vivid before their eyes the fathomless wrongs and the unspeakable cruelties that the white man has inflicted on the black, they would burn with such savage rage that they would unite to fight back, to right those wrongs and prevent their re-occurrence.

For let no one deceive you that slavery and colonialism are gone; they have only changed in appearance; they have shed their former savagery and are now marked by refinement; instead of, a frown they now wear a smile, instead of a gun, they come bearing aid. But remember what Virgil said in his celebrated epic poem, centuries ago, concerning imperialists:

Timeo Danaos et dona ferventes

I fear the Greeks, even when they are bringing gifts. So should we!

Any African leader keenly conscious of these wrongs, and racked by them as if they were deeply personal injuries, would be wary in his dealings with colonialist powers (for he has no choice but to treat with them) and would never league with foreign interests against those of Africa.

If the European spoilers had met a united Africa, when they first came, would they have been able to carry on their naked robbery unchecked for four centuries on end? Would the measureless wealth that has been borne off our shores, for four hundred years, not have been saved for the benefit of Africa?

Today we are still the victims of economic imperialism, completely at the

mercy of European exploiters. If the present generation of Africans, more enlightened than our forebears, does not unite in one determined effort to halt this rapine and save what is left, we will go down in history as a byword for spineless irresponsibility; and merit the contempt and the condemnation of those coming after.

There is therefore the imperious need, firstly, for an over-all economic planning, on a united continental basis, to increase the economic power and consolidate the independence of Africa.

Furthermore, none of the African countries, puny as they are, can stand up to a foreign aggressor. Indeed, even to quell internal upheavals, some have had to stomach the bitter humiliation of scurrying to their former masters for aid. Even Egypt, the most up-to-date and the most equipped of them all – were it not of the United Nations and Soviet rocket-rattling, Britain and France would have ground Egypt to sand in the Suez Crisis of 1956.

It is imperative also, therefore, secondly, that Africa should unite for its defence.

It may be argued that military unity serves no purpose; for even an Africa thus united would be powerless against the measureless might of modernised aggression. Answer can be made that, if such an aggressor knew it, as a matter of absolute certainty, that Africa was so united and determined that touching one part meant rousing the whole, he would douse his aggressiveness and think twice before he made himself responsible for a continental conflagration. Furthermore, if the African states do not combine their military forces for common defence, they would be induced individually, by their insecurity, to commit the historical contradiction of entering into alliances with the very forces which have wrought our age-long ruin, the very forces which are ranged today against us, the very forces we should fight and which make our unity a categorical imperative.

If we are to unite for economic organisation and for self-defence, it follows logically that we must plan together and concert our measures *in* common in all our dealings with the outside world.

Unity in diplomacy, therefore, is a third absolute necessity for African Unity there must be one foreign policy for all Africa. But one question remains to be answered: Can we stand up to resurgent imperialism as one man, can we conjugate and concert together all the means and all the measures necessary for our strength and defence and survival, can we conceive, formulate and enforce one economic policy, one defence policy,

one foreign policy, if African Unity remains for ever as it is today, vague, loose, formless?

To my mind the answer is crystal clear: No.

I believe, firmly and truly, that, for real effective and permanent unity, there must be one, strong, central, sovereign political body endowed with full and supreme authority in the following fields; economic orientation, money, defence and foreign policy. In other words, political unity is the only foundation and bulwark of economic, defensive, and diplomatic unity.

All the conferences called, all the countless words spoken, all the resolutions passed would be so much airy stuff, so much waste of time, so much dissipation of energy unless all the African states were agreed and determined that the end of the present feverish effort is the ultimate creation of an All-African Government – one, supreme continental authority to whom all shall owe unquestioned obedience and which shall be invested with the power to make itself obeyed.

Russia, the United States, India with her five hundred million inhabitants, China with her seven hundred million are virtually continental states, each under one sovereign government. In logic there is this saying: *de esse ad posse valet argumentum*; arguing from existence to possibility is valid? If a thing is, then surely it can be. If such governments have been created elsewhere and function before our very eyes, why then should those who advocate one for Africa be dismissed, with a sweep of the hand, as talking airy nonsense?

The Enemies of African Unity

The idea that African unity is unrealistic, impossible, a pipe-dream, that those who call for an all-African, continental government are crying for the moon, is European-inspired. For, since the white man has kept black men under, by keeping them divided, it is the most natural thing in the world that he should become the sworn enemy of African Unity, since such unity constitutes a formidable threat to his hegemony.

It is important to mark, how divided the whites are among themselves, but how united they become, when they face the blacks. Witness the hesitant and ambiguous behaviour of the western powers towards Portugal and .South Africa, whereas what the situation calls for is firm and stern action against these states.

As I am writing this, the radio announces that talks between Mr. Harold Wilson and Ian Smith over the future of Rhodesia have just broken down.

The British Government has warned the Rhodesians of the cataclysmic consequences that would follow a unilateral declaration of independence. Britain would take economic sanctions against Rhodesia. But the British Government, backed by the opposition and the population, hastens to assure the Rhodesians that there is no question, whatsoever, of using force against them for this rebellion. Of course, it is unthinkable that a white government should use force against a totalitarian white minority to establish democracy in favour of black men. And yet, notice that the British socialists, whom Wilson leads, are supposed to be the most liberal and the most nigger-loving of them all! Mark this too that, in Aden, the Adenis are clamouring for independence and have resorted to terrorism to wring it from the British; but have Labour contented themselves with economic sanctions? By no means, there are British troops in Aden. There was trouble also in Guiana, where Gheddi Jagan led a majority government; yet the British didn't hesitate to crack down on him and strip him of power. But, Ian Smith, no; his is a special case!

Is there any guarantee that, when it comes to a showdown, the British Government will honour their pledge and carry the imposition of economic sanctions to the bitter, total end, that is, until the Rhodesians are brought to their knees? Will the Americans and their Western allies remain steadfast in their resolve to see justice prevail and democracy installed? Only subsequent events will tell. But the chances are that, after a brief show of firmness, the British and their friends will profess their helplessness against the *fait accompli*; and their Rhodesian kith and kin will get away with it, through some subtle subterfuge, or even with swaggering arrogance.

The fact that two hundred thousand whites can lord it with such overweening insolence over four million blacks, the fact that South Africa is there waxing stronger, the fact that such an anachronism as "Portuguese" Africa still exists on this continent, the fact that white men can claim a parcel of African soil as their own, right in our faces and we can do nothing about it (while the British are taking measures to limit coloured people coming into their country) – these are frightening testimonies of the emasculation and the powerlessness of the African peoples. They emphasise the extreme urgency of our need for unity.

Let us hope that this situation will give the African leaders a jolt and make them sit up and think. For, paradoxically, these leaders themselves are the second towering hurdle barring the way to the attainment of African unity. Some constitute themselves an obstacle to unity by the animosity, the

antagonism and the distrust that their behaviour arouses in their colleagues; others by their ambition which makes them reluctant to surrender sovereignty, however slightly, preferring to be first even in puny, helpless states than to be drowned in a powerful continental ensemble.

The personal contribution of President Ahidjo and Vice President Foncha to the success and the consolidation of the Cameroon experiment is an eloquent testimony of the primordial role that African leaders have to play in the achievement of the continent's oneness.

Another factor which retards our onward march towards unity is the fact that, today, the African peoples are, by and large inarticulate spectators in so far as the conception, the formulation and the execution of policy are concerned; thus, even if the masses believed fervently in unity, they would have no way of making their voice heard on the matter; they are completely despoiled of any means to put pressure on their hesitant leaders and make them toe the line.

Furthermore it must be acknowledged that the leanness of our means, and the meagreness of efficiency and skill in organisation and management among the present generation of Africans make the attainment of an all-African unity a very herculean task, a task whose accomplishment will require time and abundant effort and sacrifice.

Yet, as I have striven to show, it is a work of much supreme and urgent necessity for the independence, the development, the modernisation, the invigoration and even the survival of the African people that to shirk it or to shilly-shally before it should be completely out of the question; that would be the betrayal of a whole continent, of a whole race.

Today we are painfully powerless to impose our will even on our own continent. But this is due to no fault of ours; for the emasculation of centuries cannot be remedied in a year, in a decade or even in a lifetime. However, if we of this generation apply ourselves, if we lay a solid foundation for the Africa of tomorrow, by the achievement and the consolidation of an unshakable continental unity, in our time, we will thereby enable generations coming after to build, upon it, a solid tower of strength whereby to impose their will, on this continent and make Africa completely African, from the Cairo to the Cape, by force of arms, if necessary.

The West Cameroon Role

When you consider that the major difficulties that await a united Africa tomorrow, in every field, are precisely those with which reunited Cameroon is battling today, when it is borne in upon you that a resounding success in Cameroon will shatter to shreds the rising myth that any attempt to tarring together French-educated and English-educated Africans is doomed to failure, a priori, you will back me up to the hilt when I assert that Cameroon unity is a history-making enterprise whose importance is of continental dimensions. You must therefore endorse my (conclusion that, to work for its success, to make sure that there shall [be a West Cameroon contribution worthy of pride, in the building of this (singular state- is an objective so exalted that it should fire our reunited leadership to forget past wrongs, to spurn petty jealousies and grudges underfoot and fling themselves totally into this lofty undertaking.

For West Cameroon has a very positive contribution to make in the building of this nation. And this it will not do by remaining passive, or by groping, dumb, deaf, and blind, as we have done up to this, and getting drowned in the Suring French East; this it can only do by carefully preserving its distinctive personality, not so much in Yaounde as here in Buea, within its federate frontiers: -by participating actively in the conception, the formulation and the implementation of the thought, the policy and the programme of the country; by taking a positive part in the creation of its institutions; by preserving the useful legacies bequeathed to us by the British – things like their language (kept in its purity), like Habeas Corpus, like development by state ownership and state exploitation of resources through government corporations.

It is only thus that we can create, for West Cameroon, a record that will impress it on every mind, at home and abroad, that, in this Federation, we are a force to reckon with, in despite of our size.

The importance of this reunion, this new get-together between the rival parties, lies precisely in this that it raises well-founded hopes that now, at last, this positive policy, this active West Cameroon participation in this singular, national enterprise shall begin in earnest.

An Unfortunate Situation

That is why it is a cause for the deepest regret that the Government party should be rent asunder just at the moment when this long-desired reconciliation with the Opposition arrives.

From a child to a man, it has always been my deep desire to serve this country to the best of my ability. That is why, from early in my boyhood, I shaped my feet towards the priesthood believing that here was a calling which, faithfully followed, would give the best opportunity for genuine, selfless service. When that failed, it was borne in upon me that the next best way to fulfil my ambition was to obtain, for myself, as good an education as the chances allowed me. This change in my life coincided with the beginning of the struggle for reunification. My soul took to this idea as naturally as a duck takes to water, and I saw at once that, since I could not take part in active politics, the best thing to do was to prepare myself, for it, as thoroughly as possible, through appropriate studies, so that, when the event finally came, I would be in a position to serve as best as possible. Luck smiled on me and gave me the opportunity to follow up my studies in Nigeria, in Ireland, in England and in France.

The radio announced victory for reunification, when I was already on the high seas on my way back, and I felt overjoyed that my faith had been vindicated after all; and I braced myself, anew, to bear a humble hand in this lofty enterprise.

But from the time I landed, I have moved from frustration to frustration.

For I had naively believed that, with the struggle over, common sense and political insight would prevail and the leaders would sink their differences and close ranks and make unification a resounding success. But I was soon to learn that they had not yet attained that depth of personal and political maturity which makes statesmen of politicians and enables them to crush personal hurt underfoot in the interest of a lofty national undertaking. I have grown up to detest bitterness and hatred and thus it was a rude shock to me, on my arrival, to hear our leaders tearing each other to bits. Today they have reached the stage where they do not hesitate to sling mud at each other in the East Cameroon press. What a shame!

I went to Nso, from where I hail, and was pained to the marrow to see the havoc that the political struggle had wrought among a once united people. There, at the level of the masses schooled neither in thought nor in restraint, the bitterness and the hate had gone far deeper still. Since then, I

have worked ceaselessly to bring unity back to my own corner of the country and have pleaded earnestly for it, at the West Cameroon level, whenever I have had the chance.

It is therefore a matter of deep personal grief to me to see things falling apart just at the point where success was right within our grasp. After all the effort I have exerted to bring the Nsos together, it would require a super-human heart to forgive anybody who comes in now to rend them asunder, to sow hatred and confusion and to ripe wide open, anew, festering wounds that were on the point of healing.

Seeing the desires that I have nourished from boyhood, seeing my deep conviction in the need for a West Cameroon United Front, seeing all my endeavours towards this objective and seeing how earnestly I pleaded for this come-together, this long-desired reconciliation between the Government and the Opposition, I cannot countenance, in any way, whatsoever, any attempt to make war upon it. I have but one logical duty; to call upon all who listen to me to give it their total support.

The Real Enemy

However, to all who love this new government in which loyal West Cameroonians put so much hope, this government that seems, in a very real sense, to be the last chance of democratic rule in this state, I would like to say this.

It is not the ravings and the machinations of its enemies that constitute the gravest danger to this united government. For if a man has healthy blood running through his veins, a very severe gash of a wound inflicted on his body may quickly heal, leaving scarce a scar; but if his blood is poisoned, even the prick of a thorn, may result in complications that may call for a doctor's knife. The greatest threat to this government, therefore, is not from without, but from within, from the doings of its friends,

It is therefore of the utmost importance for its supporters, especially the high-placed ones, to be careful in their actions. If they love this government, really and truly, they should refrain, especially in their dealings behind the scenes, from any actions which, when brought to light, would discredit the government and make it a laughing stock, the object of resentment, and drag its name into the gutter. He who in his secret dealings besmears the Jua Administration with mud is its worst enemy, even if, in public, he shouts himself hoarse in its defence.

I believe firmly and truly that for politics to be sound they must be based on a genuine religious spirit, on high moral principles; I believe that to lead well, leaders must lead clean lives both in public and in private.

Make no mistake about it whatsoever; the people have put all their hopes in this government because they believe that it will do some house cleaning, that it will right obvious wrongs, that it will bring changes and reforms. It must therefore produce results and produce them quick; else, before long, disillusionment and frustration will set in, and all will end in bitterness. But if it is resolved to do its duty, nothing will shake this government, even if a million foes are sworn to bring it down.

For a state built on justice and truth and love, a government that endeavours to act, in Lincoln's famous words,

With malice towards none,
With charity for all and
With firmness in the right,
Will strike deeper roots, from day to day, in the hearts of the people,
Will become like that house that was built upon a rock;
and the rains fell
and the floods came
and the winds blew
and beat upon that house,
but it did not fall;
It was founded upon a rock.

But a government that winks at corruption, that connives at injustice, that is led by expediency rather than by principle will become like the famous statue, towering like a mountain, which Nabuchodonosor the king of Babylon saw in a dream (an image of earthly empire) with head and trunk and other parts of gold and silver, bronze and iron; but with feet of earth.

Sooner or later a structure so loosely founded, so weak at the base, must come crashing down, and great will be the fall thereof.

A Closing Word

Yet, important as the role of its supporters must naturally be, the success of this enterprise depends largely on the leaders themselves who now sit in the new government: it is they who must do the thinking, it is – they who

must direct operations, it is they who will do the sweeping it is they who must be the watch-dogs of justice and right. And if they are to succeed, certain things will be absolutely necessary.

Among these I will place, first and foremost, a real, deep and personal friendship among themselves.

I do not mean, for a moment, that this get-together should degenerate into molly-cuddling or into a sterile comradeship of reveller. By no means.

The dialogue that has gone on between the two parties from the first till now must continue; the argument that went on across the floor of the House, often with tempers ablaze, often only with the purpose of discomfiting adversaries, must now go on in the Council chamber, in cool and friendly atmosphere, with the sole intent of finding out the truth, for the good of the State.

There is no doubt that, if there exists, among the present comrades-in-government, sincere, solid, lucid friendship, animated by tolerance and rendered fruitful by uninhibited frankness, it will go a long way to cement this union and blaze the trail for greater things.

I must now bring this essay to a close. But before doing so, I want to stress one imperative so categorical that, if it is missing, this union that has raised so much hope, is sure to come to grief and end in bitter disappointment.

This absolute necessity is the spirit of compromise. Where two or more persons or groups come together to work as a team, this spirit must permeate their deliberations and dominate their decisions; else, such a team, in the very nature of things, cannot hold together.

In order to dissipate misunderstanding and ram my point down, I will say a few words on the nature of compromise.

Compromise requires, first and foremost, that the persons or parties that have come together must agree on a fundamental, clearly- defined objective, which objective should be the very *raison d'être* of their combination. They cannot sacrifice this objective without destroying completely, the very substance and purpose of their union. On this objective there can be no negotiation, no wavering, no yielding.

Compromise requires secondly that, once this main intention has been defined and accepted, the members of the team should be prepared to make mutual concessions, to sacrifice minor differences in order to facilitate the achievement of the principal and fundamental objective,-private ambitions, personal preferences, pet opinions however expedient, however cherished,

however pleasurable must be sacrificed for the achievement of the major purpose.

The present reunited leadership in West Cameroon is already completely agreed on such an objective; for they have teamed up in the unanimous and deep-seated conviction that, in this State now, only one thing counts, namely, the welfare of the people. And all right-thinking Cameroonians will agree that this well-being comprise the policies,

the ideology, that I have laboured to expound in this essay, the establishment and the consolidation of democratic principles and institutions; the development and the exploitation of our resources for our own good, the assertion and the reinforcement of the West Cameroon personality in order to make it stand out in bold relief in the federation; the ultimate attainment of African unity.

Therefore, in all their thinking, in all their deliberations, in all their decisions, the united leadership should be guided, not by subjective considerations, not by sentiment, not by personal or party interests, but by the fundamental principles listed out above and by the concrete facts before them in each given case.

Unless they are animated by this spirit, unless they are ready to compromise along these lines, they might as well pack up the whole thing right away. For this endeavour, otherwise, is bound to fizzle out before long and end up in fiasco, in bitter disappointment, in confusion worse confounded.

The famous German philosopher, Hegel, laid down, (and with much justification) in his Dialectic Idealism, that truth advances and grows by the progressive reconciliation of opposites, by the continuous combination of theses and antitheses into syntheses, in simpler jargon, by a mutual process of union by give and take.

Such then is the nature and the necessity of compromise, in the nature of things, in the progress of human affair, in our present enterprise. The urgent need for it, in this national endeavour, is the last thought that I would like to leave for meditation by our leaders now engaged in this lofty undertaking. And more effective than whatever I may say, to drive this truth home, would be the solemn words of a great English thinker and Churchman, the famous Cardinal Newman. Writing about the nature of compromise, this is what he said:

“... when men combine together for any common object, they are

obliged, as a matter of course, in order to secure the advantages accruing from united action, to sacrifice many of their private opinions and wishes and to drop the minor differences, as they are commonly called, which exist between man and man. No two persons perhaps are to be found, however intimate, however congenial in tastes and judgements, however eager to have one heart and one soul, but must deny themselves, for the sake of each other, much which they like or desire, if they are to live together happily. Compromise, in a large sense of the word, is the first principle of combination; and anyone who insists on enjoying his rights to the full, and his opinions without toleration for his neighbour's, and his way in all things, will soon have all things altogether to himself, and no one to share them with him."

Part VI
A Case for Early Bilingualism

A Case for Early Bilingualism

Moreover, it must be remembered that an early start with languages may save the adult person years of laborious work later on, at a period when his energy and time could be put to better use.
Professor Paul Christophersen.¹⁴

A poet once boasted:

...we are the movers and shakers
Of the world forever...
With wonderful deathless ditties
We build up the world's great cities,
And out of a fabulous story
We fashion an empire's glory:

One man with a dream, at pleasure
Shall go forth and conquer a crown;
And three with a new song's measure
Can trample a kingdom down¹⁵

This is far from idle bragging. We need but a cursory glance at the story of the world to see unmistakably the tremendous power that language possesses to overthrow and destroy, to pull down and demolish; to plant and to build. Any movement that ever shook the world to its foundations, that ever sent kingly crowns rolling in the mire, had its writers and its orators. Witnesses, Voltaire, Rousseau, the *Encyclopaedists*; Mirabeau, Danton, Robes Pierre and the author of the *Marseillaise*, with reference to the French Revolution ; witnesses, Marx and Lenin, with reference to the Russian. Writers, by spreading certain ideas abroad, create a ferment in the minds of men and, one day, a demagogue from a soapbox whips the smouldering passions blazing.

On the constructive side, there is the immeasurable influence that the

¹⁴ Inaugural Lecture delivered on Foundation Day, November 17th, 1948 at University College, Ibadan

¹⁵ Arthur O'Shaughnessy : The Music Makers

great scriptures of the world – the Bible, the Koran, the Vedas – have wielded, generation after generation, and will continue to wield, till God knows when, on the lives and the destinies of peoples without number.

The power of the word, the power of literature, to incarnate a people's spirit, to inspire genuine, generous heroism, was recognized even from very early ages. The consciousness of this has given the world immortal epics like the Iliad and the Odyssey, the Aeneid, Beowulf, *das Nibelungenlied*, *les Chansons de Gestes*, the Arthurian Legend.

We have seen, even in recent history, how one man's mouth can galvanize a worsted people back to victory; how one man's mouth can sweep a gifted, powerful nation off its feet, into mad ness and disaster. Witness, Churchill; witness, Hitler. For men are wont, in moments of crisis, to turn to a talented tongue for inspiration and direction. And so it is that, wherever people gather for a purpose, the man with the gift of the word wields tremendous influence; and it is to him, more often than not, that leadership goes. If the store of a person's language contains no more than the hackneyed phrases of the street and the office, he can hardly ever hope to make an impression on others.

There can scarcely be any doubt about it, therefore, that a good education in language is one of the most effective ways of launching a young man in to life.

So much for the power of speech on others. What about the influence of language on the speaker himself?

Language and Personality

A command of language or the lack of it can have very far- reaching psychological consequences. For there is hardly a greater social handicap than incorrect speech. Those who have never sojourned abroad may not fully realize what this means. But those who have spent long student years in English and, let us say, where being black already makes you the victim of so many irritations, know what a torture social life can be to a person who is plagued by the constant fear of being betrayed by faulty pronunciation or grammar. That can cripple a personality and ruin a career that would otherwise have been brilliant. In fact, one of the reasons given for the failure of students abroad is insufficient language education in preparation for higher studies.

On the contrary, those who have had the experience can bear witness

what a tremendous asset a command of speech can be how much self-confidence it inspires, how many disabilities fad away before the chap that is armed with it.

As certainly as a poor possession of speech cripples a young- man's psychological growth, just so certainly does a brilliant grasp of it help to build up a solid and outstanding personality.

All what I have said so far hardly needs the saying, for it is all so obvious. But language exerts on us other influences, perhaps far more important, which, however, are not immediately perceptible. A look at the processes of thought, will illustrate what I mean.

The Working of the Mind

When the eyes of a child open onto the world, for the first time in life, he begins by seeing the couple of people about him, and at each act of sight, an image is registered on his retina. This image is next stored up in the imagination, to be called up and recognized by the memory, when the same face presents itself again.

Mental pictures, images, or phantasms, as they are variously called, play a very active part in our mental life. For, whenever we hear any familiar object named, especially a concrete one, the tendency of the imagination is to throw up an image of it in our minds as though upon a screen. In fact, one of the qualities of good poetry, for instance, is the power to evoke, in our imagination, pictures that please us. The emotions that surge up within us, when we read a good piece of literature, are enriched further still, if that piece of literature, by means of associations, can cause to well up in our minds memories and images of pleasant times and places from our past, especially from our infant days.

But an image is only an image of something material, something concrete and individual. And human knowledge, as we know it, could not exist, if the mind of man were unable to do more than that. For science exists, because the multitudinous essences that the world contains are divided into classes each with characteristics that are common to every member of that class.

Science is of the universal not of the particular.

Thus, the child, from contact with the couple of people whom he knows and recognizes, is soon able to separate, from the images of these familiar individuals, that which is common to them all. And so, by the time he begins to babble, seeing a man at a distance, he will chirp, as if announcing a great

discovery, 'That's a man', without knowing what particular man it is.

His mind has reached the stage where, from the concrete, individual object, it is able to abstract a universal *concept*. It is with concepts for material that the human mind works. And the power to form single concepts, in this way, is the first mental process - *Simple Apprehension*.

When our little youngster, whose eyes are beginning to see more clearly, looks at *his father*, let us say, at a given moment, he sees that he is *big*, that he is *black*. If this dad of his is with a number of persons, he will notice that some are *as tall as he*, others *taller still* ; that they are *wearing clothes*, all of them, but that while some are barefoot, others are shod. They take their places *at the table*, and the youngster perceives that, whereas *a while ago* they were *standing*, now they are *sitting*. Food is set before them, he sees them *eating*; the food disappears gradually into their mouths and soon it is completely *eaten*.

Thus it is that, when the budding mind opens onto the universe, it is first struck by the concrete object. In that act, it perceives this concrete object as extended in space; as possessing certain characteristics; as related to other things about it; as occupying a certain place, at a certain time ; as being in a certain posture ; as further distinguished, if a man, by his attire; as performing certain actions; as suffering others.

In other words, *being* is perceived by the mind as having various modes of existence. First, there is the concrete thing, the *substance*, which is endowed with independent existence, which can exist by itself. This substance has further determinations, further characteristics, *accidents*, as they are called, which cannot exist by themselves, independently of the concrete object.

Of these characteristics, two are inherent in the substance itself – *quantity* and *quality*; for the first property of matter is to be quantified, to have parts beyond parts, to have extension in space. It is next determined by other properties like colour, weight and hardness, for instance.

Furthermore, as it is but one among the myriad things that fill the universe, it possesses other determinations which are external to it, which it has with reference to other things.

Thus you have the various *relations* between one thing and other - equality, difference, the bigger and the smaller, the good and the better, cause and effect.

Thus you have the various determinations of *place* indicated in speech by such words as in, out, at, by, above, below, on, under.

Then there is the fact that cosmic movement gives to the existence of each thing a before and an after, a beginning and an end, duration in *time*.

Then there is the fact that, among things in the universe there is mutual interaction, some doing, some suffering, in other words, *action* and *passion*.

The importance of all this in speech is that it is these categories – substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, action, passion –, that supply the basis for the division of language into the various parts of speech.

Substance gives us the substantive or the noun, and the pronoun; quantity, quality and relation, give us the adjective; place gives us the preposition; time and place and quality of action, give us the adverb; action and passion supply us with the verb, active and passive.

The perceiving mind, in seeing each concrete object, is able to separate its properties or characteristics from the substance itself, is able to see these determinations, not as things existing by themselves, but as *belonging* to the concrete object, as identified, to some extent, with it. It is the ability of the mind to do this that gives us the most important verb of them all – *the verb to be*. The child looks at a man, sees his colour, sees it as belonging to the man and blithely announces: he is black.

The *Copula*, as the verb to be is sometimes known, enables the mind to advance from the simple apprehension of concepts to the next important mental process, the process of linking concepts up or putting them apart by affirming or denying: the Judgement.

Equipped with the ability to do these things, the growing mind, becoming more mature and more inquisitive, plunges into the exploration of the universe, acquires more concepts, deepens the knowledge of those in possession, and establishes richer and profounder judgements. And, as man pushes his investigations deeper into every field, and checks his findings by experiment, scientific principles are established. And these the mind uses, in turn, as a springboard for launching into further exploration to attain more truths, to acquire greater knowledge. This is the last of the mental processes: reasoning, inductive and deductive.

The gathering of concepts or ideas, from the world about us, from the accumulated knowledge of the ages, the effort to explore them, to see more thoroughly what they contain, to see in what relation they stand one to the other, in order to pass valid judgement on them, to make correct statements about them, the effort to see what follows from putting one statement with another to discover further truths – these are the activities which develop and enrich the mind.

Without them, there is no possibility whatsoever, of mental development.

And so it follows that, the more thoroughly, the more methodically the

mind is exercised in each of these processes, the sounder will be this development, the richer will be its resultant store of learning.

But where does language come in in all this?

It is precisely towards that that I am driving.

Language and Mental Development

Since each substance, each concrete thing, is composed of parts, each concept, each idea formed by the mind, is, by the very nature of things, a sum of several notes or properties. In fact, when we see how much time and labour scientists spend in the study of the nature of each tiniest thing, we see that it is practically impossible to cram into one concept all the characteristics that the thing holds in itself. The most we can do is to put in to the concept the main properties sufficient to tell us what the thing is and to help us to distinguish it from everything else.

Since the concept therefore is composite, a sum of several notes, it is difficult for the mind to express it, as such, as a unit.

And here it is that language comes to the rescue.

For, thanks to this that we not only think but can hear and speak, we are happily able to baptize the ensemble of the notes composing one concept with a name : a being with a body, a being that lives, that thinks, that laughs = a man. For every concept in the mind, therefore, there is a corresponding oral sign, a name, a word. And each word is a union of two important elements, a semantic and an acoustic – a union of sense and sound.

And as concepts are the basic material of our mental acts, so words become the basic material of the oral counterparts of those mental acts.

What is more – and this is the principal point at which I am driving – since it is so difficult to cram into one concept ‘all the notes of the thing, it very soon happens that words usurp the place of ideas in our minds; for they are simpler and easier to hold. And so we find ourselves thinking, not in ideas, but in words; in fact, when we reflect as we think, we can actually *hear* ourselves thinking in a definite language. There, we have come to the point where words have replaced ideas completely. In fact, with certain persons words so completely usurp the place of concepts as to blot out all but the whole of content and meaning, so much so that, even when these persons talk with volume and vehemence, most of what they say would be, as Shakespeare said somewhere, so much sound and fury signifying nothing. But that is the extreme; the abuse, not the use.

The important point to make, however, is that language substitutes itself for ideas in our minds to such an extent that it becomes the very warp and woof of our mental life, the material of our thinking and reasoning. And, as I have already stressed, it is by thinking and reasoning that the mind grows.

Language, therefore, is important not only because of its power over men's minds and feelings and reactions, not just because its command gives leadership to certain individuals in a community, not only because a firm grasp of it helps in the building up of a solid personality, but, above all, because it is the indispensable instrument for the furtherance of mental growth, of intellectual development, in each and every one of us.

A language with terms clearly and distinctly defined extending over every field of human learning and experience is one of the highest achievements that a people can claim to its credit, one of their dearest possessions. For the more perfect the language, the more effective will it be, as an instrument, in this all important task- the intellectual development of those who wield it, on whom it is wielded.

Language and National Character

From the consideration that language becomes inextricably blended with the very substance of our minds, another fact emerges.

It is the intimate union that must consequently exist between people who own the same language, since it creates a likeness, a oneness, in them, in that which is the highest thing in man, namely, the mind.

Thus, governments which strive, as in Israel, to give their people a common language, even if they are motivated by an emotional or rabid nationalism, are doing something that is solidly backed up by reason and psychology.

The union is consolidated further still by the fact that this language stores up not merely the cold and neutral meanings of words; it also enshrines the common experiences that the people in question have garnered from the impact of their surroundings, the memory of their fathers, their common experiences in time as a polity, their triumphs, their woes, their loves, their hates. These, therefore, reinforce that oneness of mind, that oneness of thought already forged in the people by their common language. And, surely, a common mind will tend to rouse in the said people certain common emotions, which emotions, in turn, will surely excite certain common reactions.

Thought, feeling, will and action are the basic elements of conduct and, therefore, of character – the basic elements of personality. For, after all, what else is a person but an entity that thinks and feels and wills and acts? And what else is personality but that height of human distinction attained when thought and feeling and will have become so developed, so refined, so ennobled, so endowed with power and beauty as to give rise, with constancy, to action of a marked kind, action that stands out, that impresses, that commands respect, that inspires even awe?

A communion of thought, a communion of feeling, a communion of will, a communion of behaviour –those who say that there is such a thing as a national character are not just talking airy nonsense. And thus, incidentally, the contention that there is such a thing as an African Personality is not to be lightly brushed aside. There is a least common psychological denominator that all Africans share.

However, the point I am making is that language is a very powerful instrument in forging national unity, in creating a comradeship among all those who use it.

Language and Learning

But to go back to the point of the importance of language for intellectual development: I was saying that the mind is capable of summing up these concepts in names. These names, or words, or oral signs, become still more concrete and definite by being committed to writing; and becoming thus the object, at once, of ear and eye, they become more surely the object of the mind.

In other words, the external world of things has an internal counterpart, the world of thought; this latter creates a third counterpart, external like the first, the world of verbal expression. There are three terms, then, in this equation: the Universe, Knowledge and Language. Whatever has real existence, therefore, is capable of becoming knowledge, capable of becoming language.

Therefore, there is no domain of human learning, whatsoever, that does not come under the imperial rule of language. In fact, what does studying mean, in practice, for the most part; in what does it consist for every one of us? Normally, we do not go out ourselves to explore the universe and garner our own concepts and do our own reasoning and come to our own conclusions.

Learning consists, to a large extent, in studying the accumulated knowledge stored up for us through the ages, in books, in language, that is. And it is only after years of doing this that we can venture to undertake independent research in order to contribute, if we can, something of our own, something original, to the store of human learning.

Therefore, the study of any branch of knowledge whatsoever that we take up is also and necessarily a study of language.

Today, when all the insistence is on science and technology, so much harping on the overwhelming importance of language will strike some as a startling irrelevance. But the fact still remains that, if we begin by giving our children a firm grounding in speech, we will thereby immensely facilitate their grounding in science, in technology, in economics. For the *ensemble* of human knowledge is like a tree with first the trunk and then the branches: we must first clamber up the trunk to reach the branch of our desire.

There is, therefore, an essential foundation to be laid in language as an indispensable preparation for any further studies.

This is a most natural process; for, notice this that, next to being able to put his hand into his mouth, to crawl, to stand up, to walk, to run, the skill a child masters is to speak ; and this even when no one makes any special effort to teach him. In fact, he masters it so fast and so well that, before long, he is the noisiest talker around the place.

A careful, diligent, study of language, at the start and all along the student's career, is not a luxury but a prime necessity in Education.

And the earlier this training is started the better.

My principal contention, therefore, is that, in so far as intellectual formation is concerned, language education should be the central preoccupation, the fundamental principle of the primary school. Every subject that is taught there, let it be what you will, but let it be language first, and anything else after.

When I was in school, I was wont to hear some teachers re- mark, with regard to the examination answers of the pupils : "It does not matter how he puts it, the essential thing is that he should have the idea". I say no to this: it *does* matter how he puts it; and all pains should be taken to see to it, not only that he should know it well, but also that he should say it well, should write it well.

If nature has made things easy for us, by making language so effortless for children to master, surely, would it not be a grave fault on our part to be slovenly and haphazard in assisting nature? Would it not be unpardonable

negligence to put off serious, methodical help until the best time is over?

In this matter, more than in myriad others, Shakespeare's saying rings with resounding truth, namely, that, in the affairs of men, there is, oftentimes, a tide, which must be taken, at the flood.

The Importance of English and French

The primordial role of language in the life of the individual and in the life of the community, therefore, can hardly be called to question. We have seen what a power it is in binding people together in mind and heart and will, in giving to a nation its distinctive personality, in bringing closer together the far-flung peoples that share it.

The language problem, for countries in Europe, has ceased to be an acute headache, because, for most of them, its difficulties have long been solved and, even where some still exist, the means to solve them are ready at hand. Here in Africa, the linguistic question assumes staggering proportions and, even where a solution is thought out, the means to apply it are, more often than not, dishearteningly inadequate.

To us in Africa, the language problem is still a front line issue, because, not only must it be solved to facilitate contact of African with African, often even in cases where the two are next door neighbours, but also because it is a problem inextricably welded to that of our urgent political, economic, technical, social and cultural development. And, so far, there is not a single African language, with the possible exception of Arabic, developed enough to offer itself as an effective, all -round instrument of modern technical progress. And since development cannot wait until each African nation, or Africa as a whole, has forged a language fit to be the vehicle of present-day development, we have no choice now but to adopt, on our own initiative, the languages once imposed upon us by our colonial masters, the languages that were once the instrument of our humiliation.

And yet not all of them can satisfy our need with the same degree of effectiveness. In Somalia, for instance, Italian will have to yield to English; and, I can foresee that, when the present Portuguese colonies become independent, the position of the Portuguese language will be badly undermined because of the imperious needs of African and world co-operation; for neither Italian nor Portuguese has a world-wide or an all-African mission.

Only two of these languages have this two-fold mission – English and

French. And because of this, they have earned for themselves the distinctive title of Languages of Wider Communication.

As these two languages offer, for a long list of countries, the best linguistic solution available for problems that cannot wait, problems of internal and external communication, of the transmission of science and technology, problems of the acceleration of modernization in places where rapid political changes are taking place, there is hardly any country, the world over, where the study of English or French or both is not pursued with relentless energy.

The Soviet Union, for instance, bent on world control and on victory for socialism, has the good sense to realize that the Russian language, in spite of the numerous millions that speak it, can never win for Russia control over mankind, nor victory for socialism. In the Soviet Union, fifty per cent of the children go through an eleven year intensive course in English.

Why belabour a fact that imposes itself with such overwhelming clarity? With English and French you can make your way without much difficulty right round the world.

English, however, is by far the most important of all the languages of wider Communication, so much so that, even in places where French is dominant, there is an increasing demand for English. This does not mean, however, that the importance of French is lowering. In Africa, especially, owing to the fact that almost half of the independent African States have French for official language, and owing to the present drive towards a closer coming together among the African peoples, the demand for French is on the rise, even in areas where English is the dominant language. It is borne in upon African leaders everywhere that, if African unity is to be achieved, it is imperative to begin, right from now, to teach these two languages, together, everywhere in Africa.

If this is so for every African country, how much more is it for Cameroon where both languages declared official have become constitutional? To us, therefore, the teaching of English and French must become a foremost national duty.

What Sort of Bilingualism

The constitution of the 1st of September 1961, makes Cameroon a bilingual state by law, with English as the language of the federated State of the West, French as that of the federated State of the East and both as the

languages of the Federal Government. This is similar to what obtains in Canada where, out of some ten federated States, one is French and the rest are English.

Belgium, on the other hand, furnishes the example of a unitary state with two languages, French and Flemish.

But in spite of the fact that these two States have been bilingual now for quite a length of time, not every Canadian speaks both English and French; not every Belgian speaks both Flemish and French: the vast majority of Canadians and Belgians have remained monolingual.

A bilingual State, therefore, does not necessarily mean bilingual individuals, bilingual citizens.

But, for us in Cameroon, it would be singular blindness to advantages staring us in the face, a lamentable lack of idealism, to rest satisfied with having created a bilingual State.

The target to aim at, for us, should be, not merely State bilingualism, but *individual bilingualism*: that every child that passes through our education system shall be able to speak and write both English and French.

The Need for an African Language

Having thus defined my terms, I must confess that the expression, Cameroon bilingualism, is a misnomer. It would be more correct to speak of *Cameroon trilingualism*, because, ever before the Cameroon child comes to school to learn English and French, he should have already learnt his own native language.

For, on this question, all confused thinking must be dissipated, and the point must be made abundantly clear that English and French, for all their overwhelming importance in our development and in our day to day affairs, are only *official languages*, are not our *national languages*, because they are foreign.

It is a matter for very deep regret, indeed, that we haven't one Cameroon language common to all Cameroonians. In fact, the ideal should have been one African language spoken and written throughout all Africa

Thought, as I have said, is the basis of all culture, because every human achievement however tremendous in the end, begins as an idea in somebody's mind, just as any man even though his name should later fill the earth and his power should shake the world, must begin life as a tiny ovum in a woman's womb. I have also shown how intimately, how inextricably thought and language become welded together.

How else then can a people's thought, a people's culture find genuine, authentic expression except in that people's own language?

Unless it is forged anew by Africans, a foreign language, however highly developed, however indispensable, cannot be the genuine, authentic expression of African culture. The clamours for national languages among the African peoples cannot, therefore, be dismissed, with a sweep of the hand, as the ravings of rabid nationalism; they are justified by the very nature of things. And, with African unity rising in the offing, the clamour should now be for an all-African language.

But the question is, can there be found, out of the hundreds of languages of the African Babel one which can seriously put itself forward as a candidate for this lofty office, as capable of becoming the vehicle of science and technology to the African people?

Whatever be the answer to this question, there are two African languages, which, right now, are consolidating their hold over extensive areas of the African continent. All along the arc that sweeps from Mauritania through Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya and Egypt to the Sudan, Arabic rules without a rival. To these Arab countries can be added those like Senegal, Mali, Guinea, Somalia, Zanzibar and all the other countries in Negro Africa with large Muslim populations, where the study of Arabic is sure to receive a new and vigorous impetus. Then there is Swahili gaining ground in Tanganyika, Kenya, Uganda, the Rhodesias, Rwanda, Burundi, the Congo.

Already Arabic is playing an increasing part in the conferences of African States, and Swahili has become an official language in Tanganyika. In West Africa, however, no language has anything like the influence even of Swahili in East Africa, not to talk of that of Arabic in the North.

Here in Cameroon, as I see it, the problem of an African language can hardly find a solution except in the hypothesis of Cameroon accepting an all-African language decided upon at a continental level or a regional one decided upon at a West African level. We are proud of our country as the muster ground of all the African races; yet, with its hundred or more languages, Cameroon is also the country where *the African Confusion of Tongues* is worst confounded.

Notwithstanding, each of them is a living language, vital in the daily lives of thousands of individuals. I think it imperative, therefore, that each Cameroon child, before embarking upon the learning of French and English at school, should have learnt his own native tongue at home; for, now with so many of our customs fast disappearing, an African language well mastered,

even if it is spoken only by a few thousands, is still an authentic root anchoring its speakers on the African soil and in the African past.

I notice that, in some Cameroon homes, the children are not taught their native tongue at all, or are taught it badly, French (or what is worse, in the case of some West Cameroonians, pidgin English) being spoken all the time.

Is this a healthy practice? Will it not have the effect of severing one of the last ties that bind these children to Africa and thus render them more completely deracinated ? Is this negligence not fraught with the danger of unfortunate psychological after-effects, especially if these children do not grow up to occupy positions as privileged as those their parents now occupy, and have to live in surroundings where neither French nor English is the wonted medium of expression? I am inclined to think so, but do not know for certain. That is a problem for specialists, for psychologists especially, to delve in to. It is, in brief, the question whether it is necessary, for psychological health, that a person should have the feeling and the satisfaction of belonging somewhere.

I was saying that the expression, Cameroon bilingualism, is a misnomer, because, in fact, every Cameroon bilingual will be a trilingual. But since I am talking of language in the schools and, as yet, no Cameroon language is being taught nor has become the general medium of instruction in all our schools, I will continue, in this essay, to speak of Cameroon bilingualism.

Levels of Bilingual Achievement

In the teaching of English and French in our schools and colleges, the ideal to aim at should be to produce citizens capable of handling both languages with consummate skill, capable of producing in English or French, as they please, works of art or science of the highest merit. Obviously, only a very limited few indeed, for all our effort, will ever be able to attain such a height. But the truth is that such a linguistic feat is by no means outside the bounds of possibility; for, as certainly as there are people with a particular genius for this, that and the other thing, just so certainly are there individuals with a special gift for languages.

More numerous, however, will be those who will hit the best lower target : the level of those who master one of the two languages consummately for artistic or scientific expression ; but who, though less efficient in the other, possess that other sufficiently enough in the sense that they grasp it thoroughly and can translate from it with skill and exactness, but cannot,

however, wield it themselves, with the same measure of ease and grace.

The lowest level is within the reach of any child who, being put through a well-organized and well equipped language teaching course, is prepared to exert the minimum of effort. Though unable to scale the higher reaches of vocabulary and phraseology, he will, at least, acquire, in both languages, a firm grasp and fluent use of the ordinary words and phrases of everyday life. This is the farthest that the general run of citizens will ever be able to reach. But it is well worth the effort.

Of these three levels, each person will attain that to which his talents, aided by his energy, will bear him. But what is of supreme importance is that the education system, through its organization, through the means it puts within reach and through the methods it employs, should make sure, that, at each level of attainment, the linguistic knowledge and skill of those prepared to exert themselves to the utmost, should be as thorough as possible.

In the first part of this essay, my argument was that, since language is so overwhelmingly important in life and in studies, it is imperative to begin the thorough and systemic teaching of it to children, as early as possible in their childhood, that language should be the central concern, the pivot round which all effort should revolve, in the primary school.

My present contention is that, if the importance of bilingualism, in our national life, has become so primordial, we must begin it early enough to bear it through successfully; in other words, the teaching of English and French together, here in Cameroon, should start right from the very first day that the child takes his seat in the infant school.

Considerations Urging Bilingualism

As far as I can see, the primary school, for decades to come, will be the only school for the vast majority of Cameroonians. Therefore, if we do not make our primary school bilingual, our bilingualism, in addition to being very poor, will be the privilege only of the few who will be lucky enough to go to college. But if unity of thought and feeling is to be fostered among our people, the majority of them must understand each other, the primary school-leaver in the West, for example, should be able to read the popular press of the East, to listen to eastern radio programmes, and vice versa. An ordinary chap from Boumba should be able to sojourn in Kumba and mingle with his compatriots without the present language difficulties. Our primary school, therefore, should be able to give to our children that basic

bilingualism is necessary for this mutual understanding, namely, a good grasp of the vocabulary and the phraseology is necessary for the transaction of everyday affairs.

Furthermore, the formal and immediate aim in the teaching of language is to get the children to master speech so thoroughly that, in speaking, conscious effort should be spent mostly on thinking out *what* to say and not on *how* to say it, that is, not on words and the rules governing their use. What a burden speaking would be, if the speaker had to pause to decline every noun and to conjugate every verb that he wanted to use. In other words, there can be no fluency in talking without the acquisition of speech automatisms, of speech unconscious habits. If this is so, I can see no other period of life more natural for acquiring these automatisms, especially where more than one language is concerned, than in early childhood.

External determinations, therefore, like our own purpose for bilingualism, like the general aim of language teaching, speak in favour of early bilingualism.

But the over-riding question is, not whether the thing *should* be done, but whether it *can* be done; whether it is possible in itself, from its very nature. Is it possible, therefore, to teach two languages to tender-aged children without seriously impairing their mental and psychological growth? Is infancy, in the nature of things, the best time for introducing bilingualism in to the children's lives?

Considering what experience shows, what authorities say, considering the nature of the faculties and the organs used in human speech –, I say yes.

The Witness of Experience

The ease with which children learn languages is a very common experience, especially in a country like ours with a babel of tongues. In towns where several peoples mingle, it is very common to see children who speak one language with their parents at home, another with their teacher at school and a third with their chums in the street. And what is more, very often, in such mixed communities, they acquire greater fluency in the language of their playmates than in that of the school or even that of their parents. In fact, a bilingual person's best language is not necessarily his mother tongue, but the language which exerted the greatest influence on him in his childhood.

Once teaching school in Nigeria, I had in one of my classes a youngster

who spoke the main Nigerian languages, Ibo, Efik, Hausa, Yoruba. How had he learnt them? His father, an Onitsha man, was a civil servant and had been moved East and North and West and he had picked them up as they went from one place to another. How was it like learning all those languages? Did he remember feeling any strain? Not at all; he couldn't even remember how he had learnt them.

It is astonishing the ease with which very young children change from language to language, as they move from country to country.

In an inaugural lecture on Bilingualism delivered on Foundation Day, November 17th, 1948, before the Staff and Students of University College Ibadan, Dr. Paul Christophersen, gave an account of an experiment that was carried out in a girls' school in Istanbul.

A kindergarten class was started, consisting of twenty boys and girls of about seven years of age. A large number of different nationalities were represented, including Turkish, Greek, Jewish, Armenian, Iraqi, Syrian and Bulgarian; and all, except a few British and American children, were entirely ignorant of English when they entered the school. Amongst them they spoke some fifteen different languages. There was therefore no common medium, and so the children were taught entirely in English and by an English teacher. I ought to mention that the rest of the staff were English, or English-speaking, and that in other parts of the school there was a large number of English-speaking children. No formal method was followed in the teaching, and grammar was never mentioned. The teacher spoke to them in simple, but perfectly normal, idiomatic English. The result obtained seems almost miraculous. After nine months these children had, so far as speech was concerned, become English. During school hours, in class, in the playground, and at lunch, only English was used, and there was no sign of mental translation or any kind of mental strain. In their homes these children would go on speaking their several languages, but in school they would with equal or perhaps greater ease speak English.¹⁶

Another country where the language problem is as vital as here, is Israel. The Jews of the *Diaspora* or the Dispersal are scattered, as we all know, all over Europe, the East, North Africa and America, north and south. In each country, they use the language of that country in all other activities, and ancient Hebrew, enshrined in their sacred books, for religious purposes. When the movement of the *Return* began, the Jews coming back to Israel

¹⁶ Bilingualism pp. 3-4.

constituted, linguistically and culturally, quite a motley gathering, in spite of their communion of religion and race. It was thus that the idea was born to cement national unity by turning ancient Hebrew in to a modern language, a language not only of daily dealings but also a medium of artistic and scientific expression.

In Israel, they have found, not only that the learning of this additional language comes with greater ease and speed to youngsters, but also that children can play a leading role in spreading it among the grownups.

A former director-general of the Israeli Ministry of Education and Culture testifies:

One would have thought that the arrival of hundreds of thousands of immigrants, speaking seventy different languages, would imperil the long and patient effort undertaken to bring Hebrew back to life as a living language of everyday use. The danger of a Babel of languages has been avoided because the system of education was sufficiently expanded to take in the children of the immigrants rapidly, in one way or the other. All these children, feeling the need for a common language to communicate among themselves have adopted Hebrew with astonishing rapidity and, back from kindergarten or from school, have brought it home to their parents.¹⁷

The Witness of Authority

If ever there was anyone supremely qualified to speak with authority on this problem, it was Professor P. Christophersen, who relates the Turkish experiment referred to above. Dr. Christophersen is a Dane with a Doctorate in Philosophy from the University of Copenhagen and therefore a scholar in his own language. He is also an authority in English and holds another Doctorate in Philosophy from the University of Cambridge. At the time he delivered this lecture, Dr. Christophersen was Professor of English at the University of Ibadan, with English lecturers of English birth working under him – a foreign authority in the English language recognized by the English themselves.

On this question of teaching more than one language at a time to little children and on the various objections raised against it, this is what he said:

Undoubtedly, in many cases the effort required to master two languages

¹⁷ M. Avidor : *Israel Aujourd'hui : N° 1 : l'Enseignement et ses Problèmes.*

instead of one does indeed diminish the child's power to learn other things. But is not the gain so great that it is worth even a year or two's retardation? Many of the most valuable citizens reach maturity fairly late. Moreover, it must be remembered that an early start with languages may save the adult person years of laborious work later on, at a period when his energy and time could be put to better use.

I do not on the whole think that the argument against bilingualism in childhood is very strong, but another and more powerful objection is that the grownup person never reaches the same degree of perfection in either of his two languages as the unilingual person in his one language. The Austrian philologist Schuchardt said that if a bilingual man has two strings to his bow, both are rather slack. There is undoubtedly something in this, although the argument in my opinion has been given undue preponderance. It must be remembered that the balance between a bilingual person's two languages is not something absolute and static: it may change from period to period of his life. It can be changed by an effort of will. If a bilingual person decides to concentrate on one of his languages and let the other one drop, he can achieve 100 per cent efficiency. And he will still have an advantage over the unilingual person in the wider background that his other language has given him.

Jespersen in his book on 'Language' asks, 'Has any bilingual child ever developed into a great artist in speech, a poet or orator?' The question is rhetorical and not meant to be answered, but I intend to answer it. Yes, there are many examples of bilingual people who have become great writers. In the English-speaking world, the name that first springs to one's lips is Conrad. Strictly, Conrad was not bilingual as a child: he was seventeen before he ever set foot on English soil, and although he had read a good deal of English literature, the language was up till then a foreign tongue to him. But he made it his first language and partly dropped his Polish mother tongue. If we want an example of a bilingual child, there is Hilaire Be/Joe, who was educated partly in France and partly in England, and who decided to settle in England and concentrate on English, in which he wrote both prose and poetry. Further afield, there is Rabin- dranath. Tagore, who wrote chiefly in Bengali, but translated some of his own works into beautiful English. It is not irrelevant to mention here the Scottish and Irish writers who use both English and Gaelic and Welsh writers who use English and Welsh as their media. Nor is it without interest in this connection that Milton, although he was hardly bilingual or trilingual in our sense, wrote poetry in English, Italian

and Latin, and that the medieval poet Gower wrote poems in English, French and Latin.

Confusion sets in when one and the same person speaks to the child, haphazardly, now in one language, now in another.

In initiating children into bilingualism, therefore, extreme care must be taken to link each language in practice, and thus, in the child's mind, with definite persons, with definite surroundings and with definite circumstances.

The child's mind for language ripens early and becomes immediately capable of the logical processes necessary for speech. As I see it, therefore, no serious argument can be drawn from maturation for language learning against early bilingualism.

The Witness of Psychology

In learning a language, or any other thing for that matter, it is intended that the thing once learnt shall be retained, can be recalled consciously or unconsciously, immediately or with effort, and can be recognized when heard or seen. The mental power that retains, that reproduces, that recognizes things as having once been learnt is the memory.

This is the faculty of the next highest importance in so far as learning is concerned; the first being, of course, the intellect or the understanding. For, however sure the memory, however well retained, readily recalled, easily recognized a thing learnt may be, all this will be of no avail if the said thing is not clearly understood. Similarly, however well understood a thing may be, such understanding serves no purpose if the said thing fades from the mind as soon as it is learnt.

And yet one of the first principles in learning off by heart is that, the clearer a thing is to the understanding, the more easily will it be committed to memory.

About the nature of the memory, there are differences of opinion: some say that it is an entirely spiritual power; others that it is a purely organic faculty, and, in between them, there is the school which asserts that this faculty is both spiritual and organic – a psychophysical composite. Furthermore, there is the popular view that the memory grows weaker with advancing years; but, nowadays, it is claimed that scientific experiments have proved this common opinion wrong. However, whatever the divergences of opinion may be, certain things are clear.

Among these is the fact that the soul, at least on this side of death, acts

by using the body as its instrument; and, therefore, even if the memory is a spiritual power, it cannot operate independently of sense and nerve and brain. In fact, observation shows that injuries of the brain, fevers, cerebral diseases, frequently affect the memory in a striking manner while other cognital faculties remain unimpaired. For instance, determinate periods of life, special kinds of experience, particular languages have, in cases, been suddenly erased from the memory by physical derangements of the cerebrum.

It is therefore beyond dispute that the faculty of memory is closely connected with the physical organism. And as certainly as this is so, just so certainly will the condition of the organism determine the effectiveness of this mental faculty.

Furthermore, the organism being material suffers decay with time. However regular the fund of a toiler's energy may be, his output must decrease as his instrument gets blunter.

At what period of life, therefore, is the memory calculated to be most receptive, most plastic, most capable of acquiring its most ingrained habits, its most enduring recollections?

Every man can bear out, as a fact of personal experience, that his childhood memories are among his most vivid.

Language learning is, in essence, memory work; and if there is question of initiating the child into two languages, the right policy is that the teaching of both should begin in childhood.

Furthermore, we all know that, if there are a hundred things clamouring for a man's attention, if his mind is torn between a hundred cares and worries, learning for him cannot be a smooth and effective operation.

We also know that, with each passing year, a man's preoccupations and cares and worries and fears and hopes and ambitions increase. Is it any wonder then that learning gets harder the older one gets? Obviously, overwhelmed by so many pressures, the memory, for all its innate and constant vigour, can hardly achieve its fullest.

For the young learner, these cares do not wait until manhood is attained; they begin their assault right from the beginning of his secondary school career: new subjects come in, old ones become more difficult, more intensive effort is needed, the crowded programme demands more speed, there is competition for top places, and the spectre of the G. C. E. or the *Baccalaureat* begins to loom in the distance.

Compared with all this, what a carefree time the days of childhood are?

A period when the physical organism, the tool of the memory, is fresh, healthy, vigorous, most pliable, unimpaired by years is a period when the mind is unencumbered, free from the burden of cares and anxieties a period when the memory can be used with maximum effectiveness – such is early childhood.

If there is any other period more suitable than this for initiating children into the learning of two languages, I would like to know which.

From the very nature of the memory, therefore, there is a strong argument in favour of early bilingualism.

This argument is further reinforced by this other significant consideration.

As I pointed out before, such is the power of language over mind that words, in the end, fuse so completely with the ideas they represent, that we cannot think but in the vocabulary of the language that has kneaded and moulded our minds. This is most especially so of monolingual persons.

Furthermore, as I have already pointed out, each language has not merely its own particular vocabulary but also its own syntax system, its own rules for the order of words in a sentence.

In a language like Latin in which the case dissonances, that determine the relation of one word to another, play such an important part, the position of words in a sentence is not of much consequence.

Brutus occidit Caesarem.

Brutus Caesarem occidit.

Caesarem occidit Brutus.

You can play a round with these three words as you please, but in whatever order you put them, they will give you but one meaning:

Brutus killed Caesar.

You can't afford to do that in English.

Brutus killed Caesar.

Caesar killed Brutus.

What a drastic change in meaning is effected by the change in the order of words!

Subject, verb, object that is the basic word order in the English sentence.

French follows much the same order, but then it abounds in a hundred other distinctive peculiarities, like the object coming before its verb when it is a pronoun, like the strict indications of gender, like the adjective following more often than not after its noun and agreeing with it in gender and number, like the particular question formulae, and all the numerous traits that mark off the Gallic tongue from its Anglo-Saxon next-door neighbour across the Channel.

As I have said before, all our efforts at learning any language are directed first and foremost at the formation of speech automatisms, that is, at drilling mind and memory so thoroughly in the vocabulary and the phraseology of that language that, whenever we are expressing our thoughts verbally, the necessary words should fall spontaneously into the correct sentence patterns of the language concerned.

The process of forming speech habits begins as soon as the child begins to speak and, as time goes on, linguistic *crystallization* begins to set in, especially if the learning is monolingual: the mind, once virgin land, now begins to take the form of a field ploughed according to a definite pattern of ridges and furrows and sown with definite seed. And, before long, this form imposed upon it by the particular language begins to crystallize, begins to harden, to become not only definite but permanent. Mind and memory become, as it were fixed in hard-set grooves because our thoughts have become inseparably wedded to the vocabulary and the phraseology of a definite language.

After this has happened, the learning of a second language becomes a very difficult and tedious affair, because the field is no longer virgin, the land is ploughed and sown, the old language has taken firm possession and leaves little room for the new comer.

Established habits of a first language therefore, are a hindrance to the efficient cultivation of the speech habits of a second.

I once taught English in college to a class of boys that had started the language late. I found it a difficult task because what most of them spoke and wrote was not English at all but an African idiom dressed in English words.

Linguistic crystallization explains why, after early youth, most people lose the ability to learn a foreign language perfectly.

There can be therefore no wiser policy than to initiate children into bilingualism before rigidity sets in, to begin in early childhood, the carefree period of pliant mind and memory.

The Witness of Physiology

Language, as I have said somewhere before, is a composite of sense and sound. And, therefore, just as there are definite mental habits that the speakers of a given language cultivate by having their mind and memory kneaded and moulded by the vocabulary and the phraseology of the said language, just so do they cultivate other habits, physical these and equally definite, by the constant exercise of their speech organs on that language's phonology.

Each sound that sallies from the mouth however brimming with meaning it may be, is, as regards its material composition, nothing else but air expelled by the lungs and sent scurrying up the respiratory system. In order to see the importance of this physiological side of speech, let us follow one such breath of air through the organism.

On leaving the lungs, this breath of air runs up the bronchial tubes into the larynx, the cavity in the throat that holds the vocal cords. These glottal cords, as they are also called, are two small, nearly horizontal, highly sensitive membranes. By being drawn towards or away from each other, or by vibrating like the strings of a musical instrument, the glottal cords produce the voice. They may also become lax or tense in the direction of their length and, by these variations in length, they give themselves variations in tenseness which variations in tenseness give the issuing voice variations in pitch.

From the voice-box, the breath passes by the uvula (the soft, pointed, easily movable organ that depends from the rear of the palate) into the principal resonance chamber which consists of the soft and the hard palate, the tongue, the teeth and the lips, in other words, the mouth. It is the constantly varying shape of this resonance chamber, due to the extreme mobility of the tongue, that gives out-going breath its special quality of sound. The nose too often serves as a second resonance chamber, especially in the case of sounds like the French nasals in the process of whose pronunciation air is driven simultaneously into mouth and nose.

From an examination of this mechanism responsible for speech, two main conclusions can be drawn.

Firstly: that, since, in order to become sound, the breath of air has to traverse the whole system from the lungs to the mouth, the production of one such sound requires the coordinated movement, not only of the enumerated speech organs themselves, but also of all the other muscles to

which they are attached.

In fact, it would be interesting to count them in order to see how many muscles, all told, are involved in speech and to see, from calculation, how much energy is consumed in talking, during a given length of time.

Secondly: since each language contains a specific number of speech sounds, the constant and prolonged exercise of these speech organs on that set of speech sounds results in the formation of a corresponding set of physical speech habits, by the said speech organs.

When you consider the number of speech sounds that each single language contains, and the legions of languages that there are in the world, you will realize how innumerable the said speech sounds must be even after allowance has been made for those that are common to all languages.

No child, before he learns to speak, is determined by any inherent necessity to any particular language; an infant carried away, shortly after his birth, ten thousand miles away and cut off completely from his country of origin, will never have knowledge of the language of his birth. Language, however intimately it comes, in the end, to penetrate the mind of man, is a n acquired habit not an innate property.

From this I conclude that any infant born is capable of learning to pronounce each and every one of the numberless speech sounds that make up the world's legions of languages.

But, as I have said before, each language, to be of practical use, can employ only a limited number of these sounds; and, as a result, the speech organs of the members of its group are drilled in the use of only that limited number and form only the speech habits corresponding to that definite number of speech sounds.

It is here, even more than in the case of the action of vocabulary and phraseology on mind and memory, that force of habit produces that phenomenon which I have refer red to above as *linguistic crystallization* – the hardening of the speech organ ism, as it were, into fixed grooves. And this is a thing that happens quite early in life.

When the muscles of the speech organs have thus become permanently and exclusively wedded to the particular set of movements required to produce the sounds of a given language, all other habits of movement become more or less permanently inhibited; they are, so to speak, dammed back, jealously crowded out by the set that has taken possession.

It is this linguistic crystallization, this rigidity of the speech organs, that makes the mastering of the new sounds of a foreign language such a difficult

task after early youth. Before early youth, when the speech organs are still very pliant, they can be made to acquire the habit of pronouncing correctly the speech sounds of two or three or even four different languages.

Is it not sheer logic, sound wisdom, the assurance of the best results, the forestalling of much waste of time and energy and of much frustration later on, therefore, to initiate children into bilingualism before this rigidity, before this crystallization sets in?

The tremendous advantage of starting early, especially in so far as phonology is concerned, is that habits of pronunciation, after: hey have once been acquired, are never completely lost. Even if you get out of practice, the ability remains.

There is a strong physiological case for early bilingualism.

The Witness of Personal Experience

When I read the passage in his lecture where Professor Christophersen warns that an early start with languages may save the adult person years of laborious work later on, at a period when his energy and time could be put to better use, I couldn't agree with him more. I have had deep, personal experience of the truth of what he says.

In my boyhood days, no French was taught in the secondary schools, not to talk of the primary schools. I began the study of French, all by myself, years after my secondary school days were over, at an age when few would think of embarking on such a course; for then, I was twenty-seven.

Cameroonians had started clamouring for Reunification, and it was self-evident that, in a unified Cameroon it would be necessary to know French, and know it well.

For ten years I kept at it with a determination and an intensity of effort that I have hardly ever spent on anything else. Three years after I started, late luck brought me to the university and I eagerly embarked on French as one of my honours courses. The B.A. done, I did a thesis for an M.A. degree. And that had to be written in French. As soon as that was over I undertook another for a Ph.D. That, too, had to be written in French.

During my student days, I spent two years in France, and one of these attending courses at the Sorbonne.

And yet, in spite of all the relentless effort, of all the laborious days, in spite of all the listening and concentration and speak-ing and reading and writing and rewriting, I have failed to become a fluent speaker in French, and

there is hardly a chance that I ever will succeed in becoming one.

Why?

Because I started late.

I have given a number of conferences in French in the past; and, each time, I have had to choose the laborious method of writing everything down and reading the lecture out, instead of talking at my ease.

Ten years of so much drudgery, ten years that should have been spent at physics, mathematics, medicine or engineering – studies that would have rendered me a useful citizen in a more practical sense – wasted at a subject that is intended as a preparation for more serious things, a subject that should have been done years before!

Of this I am certain, that a five-year-old of normal ability, initiated, when I started, into the study of French and English, by competent teachers, in congenial surroundings and with well prepared text books, would, by now, have acquired a fluency, in both languages, that I shall never be able to achieve in spite of having expended several times over the child's out-put of effort and energy.

Blue-print for a Bilingual Education System

This article urges the need for early bilingualism or more precisely, for primary school bilingualism. But my study would be incomplete, if I failed to indicate where we should go from there, that is, what course bilingualism should take, what place it should occupy in the Cameroon Education System.

To make my answer clear, let me first say that, in my opinion, our education system should comprise:

The Primary School,

The Secondary School,

The Higher School (the Sixth Form or the School of Arts and Science),
and the University.

Education has been comprehensively defined as the physical, the intellectual and the moral upbringing of man. In all I have said up to this and in what follows after, I am concerned principally with the intellectual side of education.

In so far, then, as mental formation is concerned, my contention, as I have said before, is that, in everything it does, the central concern of the

primary school should be to give the children a good grounding in language, that is, to furnish them with a rich fund of handy, ready works and to give them a good grasp of fundamental grammar.

The main purpose of the secondary school is to introduce the children into the various branches of knowledge necessary for life in the modern world. Through this very activity and through specific language and literature courses, it will also deepen and widen their store of words and perfect their phraseology.

Because this country is underdeveloped, one of its foremost burning needs is for skilled citizens. It will therefore not answer, if our higher education system produces merely Jacks-of-all-trades, chaps with a wide range of general notions but with nothing deep. Rather, it should be geared up to produce specialists in every field. That is why I am firmly of the view that the sixth form (corresponding to the West Cameroon Higher School or the College of Arts and Science) should be given a choice place in our national education system. As this institution does not exist in East Cameroon, it should be introduced.

It is in the higher school therefore, that specialization should begin; for the role of this section of the system should be to bring students up to scratch for effective university work. The importance of what I say here will be deeply appreciated by those of us who have studied abroad; for we all know what sufferings some students have had to undergo, what tragedies have befallen some, all because they were not adequately prepared for university studies, before they left these shores. The higher school will orientate students into specific departments – science, maths, arts, languages – and ensure this thorough preparation.

To put it simply, therefore : to my mind, the principal preoccupation of the primary school, as I have said over and over again, should be language, that of the secondary school, general knowledge, that of the higher school, introduction to specialization and that of the university, specialization.

What then should be the place of bilingualism in this system?

My contention, repeated now *ad nauseam*, is that both English and French should be taught together from the very start of the primary school. But the situation in fact is that, in each federated state, one of these languages is already a dominant language, English in the West, French in the East. Therefore, while both languages shall be taught, the dominant language in each state shall be the language of instruction for the rest of the school subjects.

In the Secondary School, the study of both languages shall be intensified and the dominant language shall continue to be the language of instruction. At this stage, it would be good to get children who show a special aptitude for languages to add Latin and even Greek to their studies; a knowledge of Latin, specially, deepens and widens the understanding of French and English as few other factors can.

In the higher school, the dominant language continues to be the language of instruction. But, as the principal purpose of the higher school is specialization, each student shall do that section of the second language that directly concerns his special field science students in the West Cameroon higher schools shall do science French; those intending to read law afterwards shall be drilled on French legal texts; those studying literature shall do the literature of both languages. If this is done with the utmost diligence and thoroughness, then the student, coming to the Federal University, at the close of the higher school, will be ready to follow university lectures in either of the two languages. If he is to study abroad, he will have the singular advantage of all the universities of both the English and the French speaking worlds to choose from. When I was studying in France, my next door neighbour, at the hostel where I lived, was a Bengali educated on the bilingual island of Mauritius. He had come to do Medicine in England, but finding no place anywhere, he just crossed the Channel and signed on in the Faculty of Medicine in the University of Paris.

In some English universities, it is a rule that students reading for honours degrees in science or arts should do a corresponding course in French or German. I have seen students with a programme crammed full battling desperately, at the same time, with a French course which they had to start from scratch. Result: much needful time lost that should have been spent on the essential programme. Result: a grade in the degree lower than they could otherwise have made, if they had done French lower down.

The university recently started in Yaounde is supposed to be a bilingual university. But the nature of its bilingualism needs to be defined clearly and efforts made, right from the start, to put that definition into effect; else the French element will become so predominant as to make the Federal University of Cameroon, to all intents and purposes, a French university.

Normally, a bilingual university is one in which any student can follow whatever course he pleases in any of the two languages. Such a bilingual university is in fact a double university With a double faculty for every branch of knowledge that is cultivated there, as is the case with the Belgian

university of Louvain, where Dutch and French are the languages of instruction. I can imagine that this type of bilingual university would be very expensive to set up.

The great advantage of the type of bilingual education system that I propose is that it makes this costly type of bilingual university unnecessary.

Since the lower stages of the system make the student bilingual, and since the higher school prepares him for his special field in both languages, it would be enough for our bilingual university that lectures can be given in it in either language, and that provision be made for both languages to be adequately represented on the staff.

Furthermore and this is very important – none of the two languages should be given an official position of privilege over the other in the university. For the fact is that, where two cultures meet in the same institute in this fashion, petty jealousies and rivalries are bound to be aroused and may run riot, if vigilance is lax – one cultural faction trying to seize control of the university by grabbing positions of power, by increasing its numerical strength, by making its language dominant.

We should keep a sharp eye against this type of thing in every Federal institution in this Republic, lest, instead of bringing off successfully this lofty experiment for cultural integration in Cameroon, we end by turning this country into a cultural battleground.

A good amount of the time and energy devoted to language is generally allotted, especially in the higher section of the education system, to studying the language's literature. This, especially in the country whose language it is and whose culture it conveys, is of the utmost importance, not merely because the learners are made to digest, for imitation, the best specimens of the language, but, more especially, because the study of the country's literature steeps the budding citizen's mind in the national spirit. For literature is the voice and the record of a people, a living influence which, by infusing the same spirit into each passing generation, preserves a people's identity against the ravages of time.

And yet, since we are neither English nor French, my view is that our policy concerning these languages should be a frankly utilitarian policy; we should consider them as tools to be mastered and mastered so well that, in whatever field it falls to each of us to employ them, such use, should be, for every one of us, an effortless matter of easy grace.

Throughout our education system, therefore, in so far as English and French are concerned, the emphasis should fall more on language than on

literature: the policy should be that, in addition to amassing a large, digested vocabulary, our students, in speaking, should be unimpeachably correct in stress, rhythm, articulation and intonation and should master thoroughly the principles of effective composition. Thus, literature, while giving them food for mind and heart (for really good literature, whatever be its origin, has always something to offer to every human being) shall serve, principally, in furnishing them with the worthiest specimens for their imitation. For one of our aims in adopting these languages is to use them to provide ourselves with a literature of our own. That is one of the foremost reasons why we should leave no stone unturned to enable our children to acquire these languages faultlessly and to wield them with consummate mastery.

Yet it will also be of supreme importance to preserve cultural links with England and France. For, in so far as each language is concerned, it is imperative that the version used here should correspond, in sense and sound, as closely as possible to the version used in its country of origin.

Cameroon Atmosphere Ideal for Bilingualism

In the principal bilingual countries in the world, Canada, Belgium, South Africa, there are factors which militate not only against the successful acquisition of the two languages by the individual citizen, but also against the harmonious bilingualism of the State itself.

Among these factors may be the fact that one of these languages is not a medium of wide communication on a continental or on a world scale, because of the fewness of the people that use it. This is the case with Dutch and its variants, Flemish in Belgium and Afrikaans in South Africa. In fact, the Dutch themselves are conscious of this to the extent that they have become the foremost polyglots in the world today; for nearly every Dutchman you meet will be able to speak at least two languages, more often than not, three or four. The smallness of their country and its difficult nature (they have to keep up a relentless struggle to shield it from the sea.) makes contact with its more populous neighbours necessary for subsistence and survival; hence polyglotism.

The same is true of French in the new world; for the five million French Canadians, cut off from their cultural fatherland by the Atlantic, are hemmed in by an overwhelming Anglo-Saxon cultural ocean 200 million strong. Thus an English speaking Canadian, except he is bent on his own personal cultivation or intends to sojourn in Europe or in French-speaking Africa,

would have no incentive whatsoever to study the French language.

That is not the case with bilingualism in Cameroon. As I have said before, English and French are so important in Africa and in the world at large, that this consideration alone should be enough to spur us on to pursue them with the utmost determination, with the relentless energy.

A second thorny barrier that peaceful bilingualism stumbles against, in some of these countries, is the fact that, there, each language is the property of a national or racial group. They gave it birth; it is the vehicle of their culture, the seal of their identity, the expression of their distinctive personality, the root that anchors them in their past, the umbilical cord linking them to their ancestors. Consequently, this language occupies a choice place in their heart and mind and is the object of deep mental and emotional involvement. You can hardly touch it rudely without cutting them to the quick. Thus any threat or contempt directed against it by the speakers of the rival more favoured language rouses very violent passions. Witness, the language disturbances that recently toppled a government over in Belgium: witness, the seething unrest in Quebec where a few bombs have exploded lately.

When things reach this pass, there is stirred up, not merely the determination to defend the threatened language, but also a burning hostility against the rival partner language. Today, in Belgium, there are Flemings who won't speak French even if they know it perfectly. And yet there was a time when French almost conquered Flanders; it had become the language of the Flemish *bourgeoisie*. Popular reaction, however, reserved the tide and won the legislation of 1932 which recognized Flemish as the official language in Flanders. Today, language tempers are waxing so nasty that even a preacher would risk at least deep indignation and, maybe, a demonstration, if he tried to speak in French from a Flemish pulpit.

How different, the situation in Cameroon! None of the languages is our own. I can hardly see any reason for any emotional involvement on the part of any Cameroonian with regard to English or French. And anybody who artificially tries to stir up such feelings here for one language against the other is either a fool or a knave; in my opinion, he can hardly be excused of ill will. It would be a Cameroonian queer in the extreme who would feel so strongly for English or French as to riot in its defence. Our bilingualism, therefore, has the big advantage that, because we can approach it with natural objectiveness and detachment, it is able to pursue its firm, energetic course in calm and tranquil weather.

A third factor that bars the road to smooth and peaceful bilingualism is where, like in Canada, the two-language State comes into existence as a result of war and conquest.

For then, more often than not, we witness, on the part of the conquerors, that dim-sighted folly, that overweening insolence, which strives to impose on the vanquished the victor's culture in addition to his rule. That arouses in the conquered that resolute rejection which, in French Canada, led to resentful isolationism. A writer in this year's April issue of the American magazine **Look** bore the follow-ing witness about the Canadian situation:

The day will never come when all Canadians will be bilingual. Even the French Canadians do not expect this. They do believe that the two languages deserve equal status and that the Confederation should be based on the principle of biculturalism. They feel that this principle has been rejected by much of the English- speaking community.

They seem to be right. Just this past December, the dean of school trustees in Hamilton, Ontario, objected to spending the tax- payers' money 'to accommodate those who should have learned English 300 years ago.' In another Ontario community, irate taxpayers forced the removal of bilingual traffic signs.

These incidents lend credence to French-Canadian complaints of discrimination. After the president of the national railroad had explained why the organization had no French-Canadian vice- presidents, students in Quebec hung him in effigy, and the Liberal party leader Lester Pearson called for an inquiry into Canada's biculturalism.

Such an inquiry would probably reveal that French Canadians do indeed have a lesser role in government, business and industry than they merit...

The nationalistic fervour of the French Canadians affects the position of Quebec's English-speaking minority. Hugh MacLennan, who lives in Montreal, is not upset by French nationalism, indeed applauds it, and points out that the French Canadians have always been scrupulously fair to the English minority. But he is distressed by the separatists and those who would deny the bicultural nature of Canada. He believes, as do many, that the roots of a true Canadian national identity are to be found in biculturalism.¹⁸

Unlike Canada, the bilingual Republic of Cameroon was brought into existence by the deep and fervent will of the Cameroon people. Cameroon

¹⁸ Look April 9, 1963 : Ira Mothner Crisis and Conflict in Canada (Article).

bilingualism, therefore, has this other advantage that the atmosphere for its growth is not marred by victor-vanquished friction.

I can hardly think of another country where everything augurs so well for bilingualism as here in Cameroon. If we take note of these advantages and strive to strengthen them, if we set ourselves to the task with resolution, with energy and with method, we may, one day, despite our lowly state, give to the Belgians and the Canadians the example of a nation of united and brotherly bilingual citizens.

The Hour has Struck! Awake! Arise!

Proving that an early start with bilingualism is the right policy, that the soundness of this policy is borne out by experience, championed by competent authority and supported by logical, psychological and physiological data, is not the same thing as saying that there would be no hurdles whatsoever along the road to the achievement of perfect or even middling bilingualism.

There are difficulties – disheartening ones. For one thing, we all know the long years of painful drudgery required, even where one language (be it the language of our birth) is concerned, to scale the upper reaches of vocabulary and phraseology, to acquire the skill to charge speech with power and to endow it with lasting and overmastering beauty. That is not allowed to many. Proof – the relative fewness, in the history of the world, of makers of timeless literature.

For another thing, to carry through such a programme successfully demands large numbers of competent, carefully trained teachers and an enormous amount of equipment, especially of text books prepared by experts. All this entails untold expenditure.

And yet, who would say that merely because staggering difficulties bar the road, a thorough examination of the nature of the problem should be put off and off? It is precisely a thorough knowledge of the nature of the problem that would determine the means and the method demanded to solve it correctly. It is therefore imperative that, in so far as this problem is concerned, we should study its nature carefully, should draw up a comprehensive programme; and while looking for more adequate means, it would be wise to make a start with what we have in hand.

Agree with Dr. Aggrey who once counselled:

Look for what you want,
take what you find,
and use it to obtain
more of what you want
say that the hour to begin has struck.

Either we gear up ourselves and set about the task vigorously, now, or Cameroon Bilingualism will remain, forever, an empty expression. It will not do to let things drift or to handle so important a national enterprise half-heartedly, haphazardly — without thorough, scientific preliminary investigation. Nothing succeeds without preparation, without thoughtful organization, without method, without energetic action.

Even if all the arguments I have marshalled in defence of early bilingualism fail to convince severally, or even collectively, one consideration alone should settle the dispute in so far as we in Cameroon are concerned. That consideration is that it is precisely our constitutional bilingualism that sets on our country its distinctive seal among the States of Africa; and, consequently, that, since sooner or later all Africa, for her unity, must do what we have done, it has become our noble mission, our special pride and privilege to blaze the trail and lead the way by fostering here in Cameroon a thorough and vigorous bilingualism.

In this enterprise, all expect from the bilingual Republic of Cameroon a more than normal effort.

Just imagine, therefore, what a sorry figure we would cut in the eyes of Africa, in the eyes of the world, if we set about a task so lofty, so inspiring, lackadaisically.

Pour un Bilinguisme de bonne heure

Convient du reste de se rappeler qu'un bilinguisme précoce peut à l'avenir épargner à l'adulte des années de travail pénible, à un moment où son énergie et son temps pourraient être consacrés à des fins beaucoup plus utiles.

Professeur Paul Christophersen ¹⁹

Nous revenons en la fâche d'ébranler
Et de bouleverser le monde pour toujours.
A l'aide de chansons immortelles
Nous baffassions les grandes cites du monde
Et, à partir d'un conte fabuleux
Nous modelons la gloire d'un empire,
Un homme hante par un rêve
Peut à volonté se lancer et conquérir une couronne
Tandis que les autres en scandale le rythme d'une chanson nouvelle
Peuvent fouler aux pieds tout un royaume...²⁰

La thèse que soutient le poète est loin d'être vide de sens. Il nous suffit de jeter un rapide coup d'œil sur l'histoire du monde pour nous rendre compte, sans l'ombre d'un doute, de la grande puissance dont dispose la langue pour renverser et détruire, affaiblir et démolir, planter et construire.

Tout mouvement qui bouleversa le monde dans sa structure, qui détruisit les privilèges royaux pour plonger leurs bénéficiaires dans la boue, fut préconisé par des écrivains et des orateurs. Nous en voulons pour preuve : Voltaire, Rousseau, les Encyclopédistes, Mirabeau, Danton, Robespierre et l'auteur de la Marseillaise, eux qui avec leurs écrits et leur verve oratoire ont fait la Révolution française.

Nous en voulons aussi pour preuve Marx, Lénine, dont la flamme de la pensée devait causer la Révolution russe. En répandant certaines idées dans le monde, les écrivains déposent un ferment dans l'esprit des hommes et il arrive un jour qu'un démagogue, se tenant du haut d'un traineau vulgaire, réveille des passions vivantes jusque-là endormies.

¹⁹ Conférence inaugurale prononcée le 17 novembre 1948 à l'University College d'Ibadan à l'occasion de l'anniversaire de sa fondation.

²⁰ Arthur O'Shaughnessy (The music makers)

Du point de vue constructif, il existe l'énorme influence que les grands livres s'acres du monde, la Bible, le Koran, les Vedas, ont exercé sur les diverses générations qui se sont succédées et continueront d'exercer, Dieu seul sait jusqu'à quand, sur la vie et le destin des peuples.

Le pouvoir que possède la parole et la littérature d'incarner l'esprit d'un peuple, d'inspirer un héroïsme authentique conçu dans la magnanimité, fut reconnu au début même des civilisations. La découverte de cette puissance a donné au monde des poèmes épiques immortels tels que : l'Iliade et l'Odyssée, l'Eneide, das Nibelungenlied, les Chansons de Gestes, la Légende d'Arthur.

Dans l'histoire contemporaine, nous avons vu comment l'éloquence d'un homme a pu galvaniser un peuple en défaillance et le ramener sur le chemin qui conduit à la victoire. Témoin l'éloquence de Churchill. C'est ce qui explique pourquoi, en période de crise, les hommes se tournent vers ceux qui sont doués du verbe pour être mieux inspirés et dirigés. Il est un fait que partout où les êtres humains se rassemblent dans un but quelconque, celui qui jouit du don de la parole, exerce une influence énorme; et le plus souvent, c'est à lui que revient le privilège de diriger.

Si le potentiel de langage d'une personne n'est formé que de phrases banales qui se répètent dans les bureaux, dans les rues, cette personne produit peu d'impression sur celles qui l'entourent.

Par conséquent, nous pouvons dire sans crainte d'être démentis qu'une bonne éducation en matière de langue constitue l'une des conditions « sine qua non » pour intégrer un jeune homme dans les réalités de la vie.

Que dire maintenant de l'influence qu'exerce la langue sur l'orateur lui-même?

Le langage et la personnalité

Une maîtrise ou une lacune de langage peut produire des effets psychologiques considérables. Car nul obstacle social n'est plus grand que celui qui découle d'un langage défectueux. Ceux qui n'ont jamais vécu à l'étranger ne peuvent pas réaliser complètement l'importance que revêt un tel problème. Ceux qui par contre ont passé de longues années à étudier en Angleterre ou, nous devons le dire, la couleur noire vous prédispose à être la victime de tant de tracasseries, savent ce que représente la torture d'une vie sociale pour une personne harcelée par la crainte constants d'être honnie à cause d'une prononciation et d'une syntaxe défectueuses. Il y a la matière à

détruire une personnalité et à ruiner une carrière qui, dans des conditions différentes s'avérerait brillante. En fait l'une des raisons avancées pour justifier l'échec des étudiants qui, à l'étranger, se préparent à de hautes études, réside dans une éducation inadéquate dans le domaine du langage. Ceux qui au contraire ont eu de l'expérience dans ce domaine, peuvent témoigner de l'avantage précieux qui découle de la maîtrise du langage, de la confiance en soi qu'elle inspire et du pouvoir d'éclipser, chez celui qui la possède, beaucoup d'inaptitudes. De même qu'une défectuosité dans le langage constitue un obstacle au développement psychologique du jeune homme, une verve abondante l'aide à s'imposer, à se faire une personnalité solide et marquante.

Il était à peine nécessaire de faire mention de tout ce que nous avons avancé jusqu'ici car cela découle tellement de l'ordre logique des choses.

Cependant le langage exerce sur nous d'autres influences, beaucoup plus importantes peut-être, lesquelles ne sont pas immédiatement perceptibles. Une analyse du processus de la pensée illustrera mieux ce que nous voulons dire.

Le mécanisme de l'esprit

Dès qu'il prend naissance au monde, l'enfant commence à voir ceux qui l'entourent. A chaque acte de perception, sa rétine enregistre une image. Cette image qui est transmise à son imagination sera évoquée et reconnue par sa mémoire toutes les fois que le même visage se présente à lui. Les tableaux de l'esprit, les images ou phantasmes comme on les appelle, jouent un rôle actif dans le processus de notre vie mentale. Quand un objet, surtout concret, qui nous est familier est cité, l'imagination a toujours tendance à se le représenter en image mentale, comme s'il s'agissait d'un écran.

Par ailleurs, l'une des qualités maîtresses de la bonne poésie réside dans son pouvoir d'évoquer dans notre imagination des tableaux qui nous plaisent.

Les émotions qui surgissent en nous quand nous lisons une page de littérature bien écrite, sont d'autant plus vives que, au moyen de dissociations, l'œuvre réveille dans notre esprit des souvenirs, des images de moments agréables que nous avons vécus dans le passé, particulièrement pendant notre enfance.

Toutefois, une image n'a qu'un caractère matériel, concret et individuel. La connaissance humaine, telle qu'elle est, ne pourrait exister si l'esprit de l'homme ne pouvait se projeter au-delà d'un simple élément matériel,

concret et individuel.

La science doit “son existence aux éléments multiples et divers que l’on trouve dans le monde et qui sont repartis en catégories dont chacune contient des caractéristiques qui lui sont propres, lesquelles sont communes à tous les éléments composant la catégorie en question.

La science fait appel au général et non au particulier. Ainsi donc l’enfant, par les contacts qu’il a avec ceux qui l’entourent, avec ceux qu’il connaît et reconnaît, arrive facilement, grâce à un mécanisme d’abstraction, à dégager des images de tous ceux qui lui sont familiers, les caractéristiques communes à eux tous.

C’est ainsi qu’au moment où il commence à balbutier quelques mots, il gazouillera en voyant un homme à distance : « C’est un homme. » Ce sera pour lui une grande découverte bien qu’il ne soit pas en mesure de reconnaître de quel homme particulier il s’agit.

Son esprit a atteint la maturité suffisante ou de l’objet concret et particulier, il embrasse un concept universel. C’est à l’aide de concepts que travaille l’esprit humain. La faculté de former des concepts particuliers de ce genre est le premier processus mental.

C’est là un simple acte intellectuel.

Quand un peu plus tard l’enfant dont les yeux commencent à voir plus clair regarde son père, il réalisera que ce dernier est gros, qu’il est noir. Si son père se trouve en compagnie d’autres personnes, l’enfant remarquera que certaines sont aussi grandes que lui tandis que d’autres le sont plus. Il remarquera par ailleurs que les amis de son père sont tous vêtus, mais que certains sont chaussés tandis que d’autres ne le sont pas.

Prendent-ils place à table, la perception de l’enfant lui permet de déduire que ceux qui tout à l’heure se tenaient debout, sont maintenant assis.

Pose-t-on de la nourriture devant ces personnes, l’enfant les regarde manger. A ses yeux la nourriture se consume progressivement jusqu’à épuisement total.

Ainsi donc, quand cet esprit jeune s’ouvre à l’univers, il est tout d’abord impressionné par l’objet concret. De cette manière il perçoit cet objet concret comme plonge dans l’espace, possédant certaines caractéristiques en comparaison avec d’autres choses qui se trouvent autour de lui, comme occupant une certaine place, a un moment détermine et comme étant dans une position donnée. S’il s’agit d’un homme, il arrive à le distinguer par ses

vêtements, par certains actes qu'il pose et par d'autres qu'il endure.

En d'autres termes l'esprit perçoit l'être comme ayant plusieurs formes d'existence. Il y a en tout premier lieu la chose concrète, la substance qui est nantie d'une existence indépendante, qui peut exister par elle-même. Cette substance a d'autres déterminations, d'autres caractéristiques, « des accidents » comme on les appelle en langage philosophique qui ne peuvent exister par eux-mêmes indépendamment de l'objet concret.

Deux de ces caractéristiques sont inhérentes à la substance elle-même : la quantité et la qualité; car la première propriété de la matière consiste à pouvoir être exprimée sous forme de, à être composée d'un certain nombre de parties, à avoir une certaine étendue dans l'espace. Elle est ensuite caractérisée par d'autres propriétés telles que la couleur, le poids, la dureté.

De plus, comme il ne s'agit que d'une des multiples choses qui remplissent l'univers, elle possède d'autres caractéristiques externes qui dépendent de son rapport avec d'autres choses. Nous avons donc les diverses relations existant entre une chose et une autre égalité, différence de grosseur, de qualité, de cause et d'effet.

C'est ainsi que dans la parole nous avons les divers déterminatifs de lieu que nous indiquons par des mots tels que : dans, dehors, a, par, au-dessus, au-dessous, sur, sous.

Il y a ensuite le fait que le mouvement cosmique donne à l'existence de chaque chose un caractère antérieur et postérieur, un commencement et une fin, une durée dans le temps. Par ailleurs on doit tenir compte du fait que parmi les choses existant dans l'univers, il y a une interaction mutuelle, des agissements, des souffrances, en d'autres termes, nous sommes en présence d'action et de passion.

Le rôle que jouent tous ces éléments dans la parole est que la substance, la qualité, la quantité, la relation, le lieu, le temps, l'action et la passion sont les facteurs primordiaux sur lesquels est axée la répartition du langage dans les différentes parties du discours.

La substance nous donne le substantif ou le nom et le pronom; la qualité, la quantité et la relation se traduisent par l'adjectif; par le lieu, nous obtenons la préposition; le temps, le lieu et la qualité d'action nous donnent l'adverbe tandis que l'action et la passion sont exprimées par le verbe à la forme active et passive.

Grace à sa force de perception, l'esprit en voyant chaque objet concret est capable de dissocier les différentes propriétés ou caractéristiques de la substance elle-même. Il est capable aussi de considérer ces divers éléments

non comme des choses existant ‘ par elles-mêmes mais plutôt comme appartenant à l’objet concret, s’identifiant dans une certaine mesure avec cet objet.

L’habileté de l’esprit lui permettant de procéder de cette façon nous donne l’un des verbes les plus importants de tous : le verbe **Être**. L’enfant fixe son attention sur un nomme, regarde sa couleur et en découvrant qu’elle est une caractéristique appartenant à cette catégorie d’êtres humains, s’exclame avec joie « il est noir ».

La copule, comme on désigne parfois le verbe être, permet à l’esprit de passer du simple acte conceptuel a l’important stade mental suivant qui consiste à lier les concepts entre eux ou a les dissocier par l’affirmation ou la négation. C’est le mécanisme du jugement.

Nanti de cette possibilité, l’esprit en se développant, en acquérant une plus grande maturité et une plus grande force de perception, s’attache maintenant à explorer l’univers. Il acquiert un plus grand nombre de concepts, approfondit ceux qu’il possède déjà et arrive à porter des jugements beaucoup plus sensés, beaucoup plus logiques.

Au fur et à mesure que l’homme poursuit des recherches dans les divers domaines et vérifie au moyen d’expériences, les découvertes qu’il a faites, des principes scientifiques s’établissent ainsi. L’esprit utilise ensuite ces principes comme base à partir de laquelle il précède a d’autres explorations en vue d’obtenir plus de vérité et d’acquérir une plus grande connaissance. C’est le dernier des processus mentaux : le raisonnement, inductif et déductif.

Les concepts ou idées que le monde qui nous entoure nous permet d’accumuler, la somme de connaissances que nous acquérons avec le temps, l’effort que nous déployons en vue de les explorer, de découvrir leur contenu avec beaucoup plus de précisions, d’établir les relations qui existent entre eux afin de porter un jugement logique et de faire des déclarations fondées, (‘effort consistant à trouver les résultats qui découlent de la comparaison de deux déclarations pour nous guider vers plus de lumière, — tout cela constitue la discipline grâce à laquelle l’esprit se développe et s’enrichit.

Sans elle, il ne peut y avoir de développement mental. Il s’ensuit que plus l’esprit est exercé d’une façon précise et méthodique, à chacune de ces étapes, plus ce développement sera certain et plus riche sera sa possibilité d’apprendre.

Mais, qu’est-ce que le langage a à voir avec cet expose?

C’est précisément vers cette question que je m’achemine.

Le langage et le développement mental

Etant donné que toute substance, toute chose concrète est composée de parties, tout concept, toute idée formée par l'esprit est, en vertu même de la nature des choses, la résultante de plusieurs indices ou propriétés. En fait, quand nous considérons la somme de temps et de travail que les savants consacrent à l'étude de la nature, dans la plus petite de ses variantes, nous nous apercevons qu'il est pratiquement impossible d'englober dans un simple concept toutes les caractéristiques inhérentes à une chose. Le mieux que nous puissions faire est d'inclure dans un concept les principales propriétés qui nous fournissent l'essence même de la chose et nous aident à la distinguer de toute autre. Puisque donc un concept a un caractère composite, qu'il est la résultante de plusieurs indices, il devient donc difficile à l'esprit de l'exprimer en tant que tel, sous forme d'unité.

C'est ici qu'intervient le langage pour jouer un rôle important. Car non seulement il nous aide à penser mais encore à entendre et à parler. Grâce à cette facilité, nous arrivons à synthétiser l'ensemble des indices d'un concept par un simple nom : Un être avec un corps, un être qui vit, qui pense, qui rit = homme.

A chaque concept qui prend naissance à l'esprit, correspond une forme orale, un nom, un mot. Chaque mot est une combinaison de deux éléments importants : un élément sémantique et un autre acoustique. C'est une combinaison de sens et de son.

Comme les concepts gouvernent les actes mentaux, les mots deviennent le facteur primordial des contreparties de ces actes.

De plus, et c'est là le point capital sur lequel nous tenons à insister, comme il est difficile de considérer dans un simple concept tous les indices d'une chose, il arrive que dans notre esprit, des mots se substituent à des idées car ils sont plus simples et plus faciles à retenir. Nous nous trouvons donc en présence d'une forme de pensée qui se traduit par des mots plutôt que par des idées.

En fait, nous pouvons effectivement entendre la forme de notre pensée, dans un langage spécifique, quand il nous arrive de réfléchir en pensant. C'est ici que les mots remplacent les idées complètement. Chez certaines personnes, les mots se substituent aux idées à un point tel qu'ils en éliminent la signification profonde. Ceci est d'autant plus vrai quand ces personnes parlent à haute voix et avec véhémence.

La plus grande partie de ce qu'elles avancent serait, comme l'a décrit

Shakespeare : « tant de bruit et d'empportement pour ne rien dire ». Avais ce point extrême, on ne l'atteint que si le verbe devient verbalisme !

Il convient cependant de souligner que dans notre esprit, les mots se substituent aux idées à un point tel qu'ils deviennent l'essence de notre vie mentale, le véhicule de notre pensée et de notre raisonnement.

Comme nous l'avons déjà signalé, c'est par la pensée et le raisonnement que l'esprit se développe. **Le langage est donc important** non seulement en raison de la puissance qu'il exerce sur l'esprit, les sentiments et les réactions de l'homme, non seulement en raison du « leadership » que sa maîtrise peut donner à certains dans une communauté donnée, non seulement parce qu'une fermeté dans le langage peut être d'un grand apport dans la formation de la personnalité mais surtout parce qu'il est l'instrument indispensable à l'avancement du progrès mental, intellectuel de tous.

Un langage fait de termes clairement et distinctement définis, embrassant tous les domaines de l'étude et de l'expérience humaines, constitue l'un des plus grands succès qu'un peuple puisse avoir à son actif et l'un de ses trésors les plus chers. Car plus le langage est parfait, plus il sera efficace en tant qu'instrument au service du développement intellectuel de ceux qui le manient et de ceux sur qui on l'exerce

Le langage et le caractère national

Du fait que le langage est intimement lié à la substance de notre esprit, découle un autre facteur. Il s'agit de l'union intime qui, en conséquence, doit exister parmi ceux qui sont de même expression, puisque la langue crée chez eux une similitude, une unité d'esprit. Or l'esprit, c'est ce qu'il y a de plus intime chez l'homme.

Ainsi donc les gouvernements qui, comme Israël, s'efforcent de donner à leurs peuples une langue commune, entreprennent une œuvre méritoire guidée par la raison et la psychologie même si ces gouvernements prennent cette directive dans le but d'assouvir un nationalisme borne et susceptible.

Cette union se trouve davantage consolidée par le fait que cette langue ne se contente pas seulement d'emmagasiner les mots et leur simple signification, mais consacre en plus les communes que le peuple a vécues et qui sont le fruit de ses contacts avec ses voisins, du trésor culturel de ses ancêtres, des faits qu'il a enregistrés dans le temps, en tant que communauté, de ses triomphes, ses échecs, ses amours et ses haines.

Tous ces éléments renforcent donc cette union d'esprit, de pensée, union

qui se trouve déjà à l'état latent dans le peuple de par sa **langue commune**. Et il est hors de doute qu'une **communion dans les esprits** tendra à susciter chez ce peuple des émotions communes, émotions qui à leur tour engendreront certaines communes.

La pensée, le sentiment, la volonté et l'action sont les éléments de base de la conduite et par conséquent du caractère de la personnalité. Car après tout, que représente une personne, si ce n'est une entité douée de la faculté de penser, de sentir, de vouloir et d'agir? Et qu'est-ce qu'on entend par personnalité, si ce n'est degré de distinction humaine atteint quand la pensée, le sentiment, la volonté se sont développés, épures, ennoblis de pouvoir et de beauté a un point qu'ils s'extériorisent par un caractère ferme, par des actes distingués, actes qui s'imposent, qui impressionnent, exigent le respect et suscitent même la crainte. Une communion de pensées, de sentiments, de volonté et de comportements : Tels sont les facteurs qui conditionnent le caractère national. Aussi ceux qui disent que le caractère national existe ne disent pas chose absurde. Et la thèse qui veut qu'il existe une personnalité africaine doit faire l'objet d'un examen consciencieux. Il existe en effet un dénominateur psychologique commun que partagent tous les Africains. Cependant, le point sur lequel nous voulons insister est que la langue représente un instrument très puissant au service de l'unité nationale. C'est aussi un très grand atout pour créer des rapports humains entre tous ceux qui l'utilisent, quelques soient leurs pays.

La langue et le savoir

Mais revenons à l'importance du langage envisagé sur le plan du développement intellectuel. Nous disions que l'esprit est capable de synthétiser les concepts en noms. Ces noms qui sont des mots ou expressions orales deviennent encore plus concrets et définis quand ils sont rédigés. En devenant ainsi audibles et lisibles, ils sont d'autant plus liés à l'esprit. En d'autres termes le monde externe des choses a une contrepartie intérieure : le monde de la pensée. Celui-ci crée une troisième contrepartie, externe comme la : le monde 'de [expression verbale.

Nous sommes donc en présence d'une équation à trois termes: l'Univers, le Savoir et le Langage. Par conséquent tout ce qui a une existence réelle peut se transformer en savoir et en langue.

C'est pourquoi il n'existe aucun domaine du savoir qui ne subisse l'emprise des régies du langage. Car que signifie « étudier » quand nous

considérons ce mot dans son sens le plus général? En quoi! Consiste-t-il pour chacun de nous? Normalement, nous n'entreprenons pas notre propre exploration de l'univers en vue de recueillir des concepts qui sont bien à nous, de procéder à notre déduction personnelle et d'établir par ce fait des conclusions particulières.

Apprendre consiste dans une large mesure à étudier la somme de connaissances accumulées au cours des temps et qui se trouvent dans les livres, dans la langue. Ce n'est qu'après des années d'étude que nous pouvons nous permettre de procéder à des recherches individuelles et d'apporter, dans la mesure où nous le pouvons, une contribution personnelle et originale pour l'ensemble du savoir humain.

Par conséquent l'étude d'une branche quelconque du savoir enframe aussi et forcément celle de la langue.

A cette époque où la science et la technologie font l'objet de tant de préoccupations, on pourrait croire que nous vivons en dehors de notre siècle en insistent sur le rôle considérable que joue la langue. Cependant, il n'en demeure pas moins vrai que si nous donnons à nos enfants une base linguistique solide, nous faciliterons grandement leur tâche quand il s'agira d'aborder les domaines scientifique, technologique et économique.

La connaissance humaine peut être comparée à un arbre comprenant tout d'abord un tronc et ensuite des branches. Si nous voulons atteindre une branche, il nous faut passer par le tronc. Le langage constitue une base essentielle qu'il convient d'assurer et qui nous permettra de nous lancer vers d'autres études beaucoup plus avancées. C'est un processus naturel.

Après avoir été en mesure de porter la main à la bouche, de ramper, de se tenir debout, de marcher, de courir, un enfant essaie ensuite de parler et ce, sans que personne intervienne pour lui enseigner le précède à suivre. Il maîtrise ce don si vite et si bien qu'avant longtemps il devient le bavard le plus abondant de son milieu.

Une étude soigneuse et dynamique de la langue, entreprise au début et tout le long de sa carrière n'est pas pour l'étudiant un élément superflu mais une nécessité primordiale sur laquelle est axée son éducation. Cette pratique produira d'autant plus de fruits si on la met en œuvre dès le début.

Par conséquent notre thèse majeure est la suivante : dans la mesure où il est question de formation intellectuelle, l'éducation linguistique doit être la préoccupation essentielle et le principe fondamental qui doivent gouverner l'enseignement primaire. Tout objet d'étude entrant dans le cadre de cette formation doit céder la première place à la langue.

Quand j'étais à l'école j'ai souvent entendu certains instituteurs dire au sujet des réponses d'élèves aux examens :

« Peu importe la forme qu'il a employée pour répondre; ce qui nous intéresse surtout c'est qu'il ait donné l'idée maîtresse. »

^Je suis contre une telle façon de concevoir les choses. La forme revêt une importance capitale et tout le temps nécessaire doit être consacré pour la soigner, car non seulement l'élève doit être bien imprégné de son sujet d'étude mais encore il doit pouvoir l'exprimer et l'écrire d'une façon correcte.

Si la nature nous a favorisés en permettant à l'enfant de maîtriser le langage sans efforts, ne serait-ce pas, par contre, une erreur grave de notre part que de l'aider sans soin ni méthode? Ne serait-ce pas de notre part une négligence impardonnable que de laisser passer le temps propice?

Dans ce domaine plus que dans tout autre prévalent les mots de Shakespeare

« Dans les affaires humaines se présente fréquemment une marée montante qui doit être endiguée à la crue même. »

L'importance de l'anglais et du français

Le rôle capital que joue la langue dans la vie de l'être humain et dans celle d'une communauté peut être à peine mis en doute. Nous avons vu son importance primordiale dans l'union des esprits, des cœurs, des volontés d'un peuple. Nous avons étudié également le rôle qu'elle joue dans la personnalité distinctive d'une nation, dans le rapprochement qu'elle stimule parmi les grandes populations qui la partagent.

Le problème de langue a cessé d'être pour les pays européens un obstacle insurmontable car la plupart de ces pays ont trouvé depuis longtemps le remède à y apporter. Dans les rares pays où se pose encore ce problème, les moyens qui tendent à le résoudre sont disponibles.

Pour nous, en Afrique, l'handicap linguistique prend des proportions énormes et même dans les pays où une solution a été trouvée, les moyens qui eussent pu permettre de la mettre en pratique, restent à notre grand regret inadéquats. Pour nous autres qui sommes Africains, le problème linguistique occupe toujours une place de premier plan. Il doit être résolu non seulement pour faciliter le contact d'Africain à Africain, car le problème se pose parfois même pour de proches voisins, mais encore pour répondre aux impératifs de notre développement politique, économique, technique, social et culturel.

Jusqu'ici, il n'existe aucune langue africaine, si nous exceptons peut-être la langue arabe, qui ait subi un essor suffisant pour lui permettre de s'imposer en tant qu'instrument efficace du progrès technique moderne. Puisque le développement ne peut se payer le luxe d'attendre que chaque nation africaine ou l'Afrique entière ait forgé une langue qui soit en mesure de véhiculer le progrès actuel, nous n'avons pas le choix, nous devons adopter celles qui nous ont été imposées par nos maîtres colonisateurs, celles qui, pendant un moment furent l'instrument de notre humiliation.

Malgré tout, ces langues ne peuvent pas toutes satisfaire à nos besoins avec le même degré d'efficacité.

En Somalie par exemple, l'Italien devra céder la place à l'anglais. Nous pouvons prévoir qu'au moment où les colonies portugaises accèderont à l'indépendance, le portugais perdra du terrain en raison même de la coopération avec le monde et avec l'Afrique, car l'italien et le portugais n'ont pas de rayonnement mondial, de rayonnement sur le continent africain. L'anglais et le français sont les seules langues qui aient cette double mission. C'est ce qui explique le qualificatif de « langues de grande communication » qu'elles ont reçu.

Comme ces deux langues représentent pour un grand nombre de pays la meilleure solution linguistique possible pour surmonter les obstacles qui nécessitent un remède immédiat, pour surmonter les difficultés que posent la communication avec l'intérieur autant qu'avec l'extérieur, l'enseignement de la science et de la technologie, l'accélération de la modernisation dans les milieux où se produisent de rapides changements politiques, il existe peu de pays au monde où l'étude de l'anglais ou du français, ou des deux à la fois, ne soit vigoureusement poussée.

Pour citer un exemple, l'Union Soviétique, par souci de dominer le monde et de faire triompher le Socialisme, a été assez lucide pour comprendre que la langue russe, bien qu'elle soit parlée par plusieurs millions de personnes, ne peut s'imposer et militer nettement en faveur de cette domination sur l'espèce humaine, ni ne peut asseoir la victoire du Socialisme.

En Union Soviétique, cinquante pour cent des élèves suivent des cours intensifs d'anglais, s'échelonnant sur une durée de onze années.

Pourquoi vouloir ignorer un fait qui se présente de lui-même avec tant d'évidence?

Avec l'anglais et le français on peut Taire son chemin dans le monde entier sans trop de difficultés.

Cependant, l'anglais est de beaucoup la plus importante des langues de

grande communication. Ceci est d'autant plus vrai que même dans les milieux où domine le français, il existe une demande croissante de connaissances anglaises. Toutefois, un tel fait ne tend nullement à diminuer l'importance du français. En Afrique, d'une façon particulière, étant donné que presque la moitié des Etats indépendants sont d'expression française, que la tendance actuelle veut une entente plus étroite parmi les populations africaines, le français est en hausse et même dans les secteurs où l'anglais est la langue dominante.

L'idée s'implante de plus en plus chez les leaders africains de partout que si l'unité africaine doit se matérialiser dans les faits, il est impératif de commencer en ce moment même à enseigner l'anglais et le français dans toutes les écoles.

Si c'est là un impératif pour tous les pays africains, que dire du Cameroun où les deux langues, parce qu'officielles, sont devenues constitutionnelles? L'enseignement de l'anglais et du français doit être pour nous une tâche nationale de première importance.

De quelle sorte de bilinguisme s'agit-il?

En vertu de la Constitution du premier septembre 1961, le Cameroun est légalement un Etat bilingue où l'anglais est la langue de l'Etat fédéré de l'ouest, le français celle de l'est et les deux, celles du Gouvernement Fédéral.

Cette structure est identique à celle que nous retrouvons au Canada où sur les dix Etats fédérés il n'y en a qu'un qui soit d'expression française tandis que tous les autres sont d'expression anglaise.

La Belgique fournit d'autre part l'exemple d'un Etat unitaire bilingue avec le français et le flamand.

Cependant, bien que ces deux Etats aient été bilingues depuis assez longtemps, tous les canadiens ne parlent pas l'anglais et le français; tous les Belges ne parlent pas le français et le flamand.

La grande majorité des canadiens et des belges sont restés monolingues. Un Etat bilingue ne suppose donc pas nécessairement des individus, des citoyens bilingues.

Mais pour nous, au Cameroun, ce serait une méconnaissance des avantages qui s'offrent à nous et un manque regrettable d'idéal que de nous contenter d'avoir créé un état bilingue.

L'objectif que nous devons viser doit plutôt être un bilinguisme individuel grâce auquel chaque enfant qui suit le cycle de notre système

d'éducation sera capable de parler l'anglais et le français.

La nécessité d'une langue africaine

Ayant défini ainsi notre position, nous devons avouer que ('expression « bilinguisme camerounais » est impropre. Il conviendrait de parler plutôt de « trilinguisme camerounais » puisque avant même que l'enfant camerounais fréquente les établissements scolaires pour apprendre l'anglais et le français, il a déjà appris sa propre langue vernaculaire.

Il est nécessaire de dissiper toute équivoque sur cette question et d'insister sur le fait que l'anglais et le français, bien qu'ils aient une importance capitale dans le développement de notre système social et dans celui de nos affaires quotidiennes, restent pour nous des langues officielles. Elles ne représentent pas notre langage national parce qu'elles restent étrangères.

Ce doit être pour nous une source de profonds regrets que nous n'ayons pas une langue, commune à tous les camerounais. L'idéal serait d'avoir une langue africaine parlée et écrite dans toute l'Afrique.

La pensée comme nous l'avons dit est la base de toute culture. Toute réalisation humaine, quelque éclatante qu'elle puisse devenir, prend d'abord naissance sous forme d'idées dans l'esprit; de même que l'homme, même si son nom doit rayonner dans le monde entier, même si son pouvoir doit bouleverser l'univers, doit commencer sa vie comme un minuscule embryon dans le sein de sa mère.

Nous avons déjà signalé comment la pensée humaine est intimement, irrémédiablement liée au langage. Comment donc un peuple peut-il arriver à exprimer sa pensée, à extérioriser sa vraie culture et à trouver son expression authentique si ce n'est dans sa propre langue?

A moins que les Africains ne la modèlent à leur façon, une langue étrangère, quel que soit le degré de développement qu'elle ait atteint, quel que puisse être son caractère indispensable, ne peut représenter ('expression réelle, authentique de la culture africaine. La demande insistante de langues nationales pour véhiculer la pensée africaine ne doit pas être écoutée d'une sourde oreille comme les paroles incohérentes d'un nationalisme borne. Cette demande trouve sa justification dans la nature même des choses.

Avec l'unité africaine qui se dessine au large, on devrait postuler une langue africaine véhiculaire. Mais la question qui se pose est de savoir si, parmi les centaines de dialectes mélanges que Ton trouve en Afrique, on peut

en trouver un qui puisse jouer avantageusement un rôle prépondérant, un qui soit capable de véhiculer la science et la technologie aux Africains.

Peu importe la réponse que nous trouvons à cette question, nous devons reconnaître qu'il existe, au moment où le problème linguistique fait l'objet de notre examen, deux langues africaines qui s'affirment de plus en plus dans d'importants secteurs africains. En partant de la Mauritanie pour traverser le Maroc, l'Algérie, la Tunisie, la Lybie, l'Égypte et atteindre le Soudan, la langue arabe occupe une place incontestée. A ces pays il convient d'ajouter d'autres tels que le Sénégal, le Mali, la Guinée, la Somalie, le Zanzibar et d'autres encore qui comptent d'importantes populations musulmanes ou l'étude de la langue arabe recevra une impulsion nouvelle et constante.

Le Swahili ensuite, gagne du terrain au Tanganyika, au Kenya, en Ouganda, dans les Rhodésies, au Rwanda, au Burundi et au Congo.

La langue arabe joue déjà un rôle de plus en plus important dans les conférences organisées par les Etats africains, tandis que le Swahili est devenu la langue officielle du Tanganyika. Par contre aucune langue n'exerce, en Afrique occidentale, une influence semblable à celle du Swahili en Afrique orientale, encore moins h celle de la langue arabe en Afrique septentrionale. Au Cameroun, comme nous le constatons, nous pouvons difficilement trouver une solution au problème que pose une langue africaine; à moins que nous adoptions une langue africaine en vigueur à l'échelle continentale ou encore une langue régionale utilisée dans toute l'Afrique occidentale.

Nous sommes fiers de notre pays en tant que point de ralliement de toutes les races africaines. Cependant avec son nombre excessif de dialectes, le Cameroun est aussi le pays où la confusion linguistique africaine a atteint son paroxysme. Cependant, chacun d'eux, est un dialecte vivant dont (l'importance ne doit pas être minimisée dans la vie quotidienne de milliers d'êtres humains. Nous croyons par conséquent qu'il est très nécessaire que chaque enfant camerounais, avant d'entamer l'étude du français et de l'anglais, apprenne sa propre langue vernaculaire dans son village, car avec la disparition croissante de nos coutumes, une langue africaine bien maîtrisée, même si elle n'est parlée que par quelques milliers de personnes, rattache authentiquement ceux qui la parlent au sol et au passé africain.

Nous avons remarqué que chez certains Camerounais, on n'enseigne même plus aux enfants leur langue vernaculaire, ou alors d'une façon lamentable, tandis que le français ou, (ce qui est pire pour certains camerounais occidentaux) le pidgin, est parlé à longueur de journée.

Est-ce la une pratique sensée? Ne produira-t-elle pas comme effets

l'élimination radicale des derniers liens qui unissent ces enfants avec l'Afrique en les rendant plus isolés de leur « *modus vivendi* »? N'est-ce pas là une négligence de nature à entraîner des conséquences psychologiques malheureuses, surtout si ces enfants n'arrivent pas, comme leurs parents, à occuper des positions privilégiées et se voient obligés de vivre dans des milieux où l'anglais et le français ne représentent pas un véhicule habituel d'expression?

Nous sommes enclins de penser ainsi, bien que nous ne puissions l'affirmer de façon certaine.

C'est aux spécialistes et aux psychologues qu'il revient d'approfondir un tel problème.

En résumé, il s'agit de savoir si pour son bien-être psychologique, il est nécessaire qu'une personne ait la sensation et la satisfaction d'appartenir à un milieu.

Nous disions que l'expression « bilinguisme camerounais » est impropre car en fait, tout Camerounais bilingue sera forcément trilingue. Mais puisque nous parlons de langue au niveau scolaire et qu'aucune langue nationale n'est enseignée ni n'est devenue un moyen général d'instruction, le bilinguisme camerounais continuera de faire l'objet de notre étude dans cet exposé.

Degrés de bilinguisme

Le but idéal à atteindre dans nos écoles serait de produire des citoyens capables de manier les deux langues à la perfection, à même de produire en français ou en anglais, selon leur choix, des œuvres littéraires ou scientifiques de valeur. Il va de soi que, quels que soient nos efforts, un nombre très restreint d'individus parviendront à un niveau aussi élevé. Mais il n'en demeure pas moins que cette perfection linguistique est belle et bien réalisable, car aussi vrai que certaines personnes naissent avec des dispositions particulières pour telle ou telle matière, il est aussi établi que d'autres jouissent de dons marqués pour les langues.

Plus nombreux, toutefois, seront ceux qui n'atteindront qu'une honorable moyenne : ceux qui n'utiliseront avec maîtrise que l'une des deux langues, pour la création littéraire, artistique ou scientifique; ceux qui, bien que moins efficaces dans l'autre, la possèdent suffisamment pour en pénétrer l'originalité et la traduire adroitement et fidèlement, sans toutefois la manier avec autant d'aisance et de bonheur.

Le niveau le plus bas est à la portée de n'importe quel enfant qui, ayant

subi un enseignement bien organisé en matière de langue, est prêt à fournir le minimum d'effort. Bien que incapable d'atteindre aux plus hauts niveaux du vocabulaire et de la phraséologie, du moins acquerra-t-il dans les deux langues une bonne connaissance et un usage courant des mots ordinaires et des expressions de la vie quotidienne. C'est le maximum auquel ne pourra jamais parvenir la grosse masse des citoyens, mais cela vaut la peine d'être tente.

De ces trois niveaux, chacun atteindra celui auquel le porteront ses capacités et son énergie. Mais ce qui importe avant tout c'est que, de par son organisation, de par les moyens déployés, de par les méthodes adoptées, le système d'enseignement puisse assurer à tous les niveaux une connaissance linguistique aussi complète que possible à ceux qui sont prêts à en faire l'effort.

Dans la première partie de cette étude (l'argument avancé était que, du fait de la place capitale que tient la langue dans la vie et les études, la nécessité s'impose de l'enseigner systématiquement aux enfants dès leur jeune âge, de faire de la langue le souci majeur de l'enseignement primaire, le pivot central autour duquel tourneraient tous nos efforts.

Si l'importance du bilinguisme revêt un aspect aussi primordial dans notre vie nationale, je soutiens donc qu'il est nécessaire d'en assurer le succès le plutôt possible. En d'autres termes, l'enseignement de l'anglais et du français au Cameroun, devrait commencer dès le premier jour ou l'enfant aura pris sa place sur les bancs de l'école primaire.

Considérations en faveur du bilinguisme

Aussi loin que je puisse le voir, l'école primaire restera pour les décades à venir la seule école accessible à la vaste majorité des Camerounais. Par conséquent, si nous ne rendons pas nos écoles primaires bilingues, notre bilinguisme, outre sa qualité très faible, ne constituera que le privilège du petit nombre de ceux qui auront la chance d'aller au collège. Mais si notre intention est de promouvoir une unité de pensée et de sentiment dans le peuple, il s'agira de se comprendre mutuellement; celui qui, dans la partie occidentale, se serait arrêté à ses études primaires, devra être en mesure, par exemple, de lire la presse populaire de la partie orientale, de se mettre à l'écoute de ses programmes radiophoniques, et vice versa. Un habitant venu de Boumba devra pouvoir séjourner à Kumba et vivre de la vie de ses compatriotes sans éprouver les difficultés de langue actuelles. Notre école

primaire devra donc tendre à faire acquérir à nos enfants ce bilinguisme de base indispensable à notre compréhension mutuelle, à savoir un bon bagage de vocabulaire et de phrases appropriées aux besoins de la vie quotidienne.

En outre, l'objet immédiat et formel de l'enseignement des langues est de faire acquérir à l'enfant une maîtrise si complète de la langue que l'effort intellectuel qu'il déploie en parlant porte plus sur ce qu'il va dire que sur la manière dont il va s'exprimer, c'est-à-dire qu'il n'ait pas à chercher ses mots, ni les régies qui gouvernent leur emploi. Parler deviendrait vite fastidieux si le locuteur devait d'abord décliner chaque nom et conjuguer chaque verbe qu'il a l'intention d'utiliser ! En d'autres termes, il ne peut y avoir d'aisance dans l'utilisation d'une langue sans l'acquisition préalable de certains automatismes, de certaines habitudes inconscientes de langage. S'il en est ainsi, je ne vois pas d'autres périodes dans la vie plus propices à l'acquisition de ces automatismes que la tendre enfance.

Des considérations d'ordre externe, telles que notre option pour le bilinguisme et les principes généraux de l'enseignement des langues, militent donc en faveur d'un bilinguisme précoce.

La question essentielle n'est donc pas de savoir si Ton **doit faire** quelque chose, mais si l'on **peut** le faire; si cette chose est en elle-même, dans sa nature. Est-il possible, par, d'enseigner deux langues à des enfants d'un âge tendre sans altérer gravement leur croissance mentale et psychologique? Est-ce que l'enfance est, par nature, la période la plus appropriée pour introduire le bilinguisme dans l'existence?

Me basant sur les légions de l'expérience tant commune que personnelle sur les opinions autorisées, considérant la nature des facultés et des organes sollicités dans le parler humain, je réponds :

Oui.

Le témoignage de l'expérience commune

La facilité avec laquelle les enfants apprennent, est connue de tout le monde, surtout dans un pays comme le nôtre qui constitue une véritable tour de Babel linguistique. Dans les villes, où se retrouvent des gens divers, il est très courant de voir un enfant parler une langue à la maison avec ses parents, une autre avec son maître à l'école et une troisième avec ses camarades dans la rue. Et plus encore, il arrive très souvent que dans un milieu aussi mixte, l'enfant acquière une plus grande facilité à s'exprimer dans la langue de ses camarades que dans celle de l'école ou même de ses parents. En fait, pour un

bilingue, la langue qu'il manie la mieux n'est pas forcément sa langue maternelle, mais celle qui a exercé le plus d'influence sur lui durant son enfance.

Alors que j'enseignais au Nigeria, j'eus un élève qui parlait les principales langues nigériennes, l'ibo, l'efik, le haoussa et le yoruba. Comment les avait-il apprises? Son père, un fonctionnaire originaire d'Onitsha, avait été successivement affecté dans Test, le nord et l'Ouest du pays et son fils avait acquis ces langues au fur et à mesure de ses déplacements. De quelle façon est-il parvenu à acquérir toutes ces langues? Se souvient-il d'avoir fourni un effort particulier? Aucunement; il ne se rappelle même pas comment il les^a apprises.

Cela nous étonne toujours de voir avec quelle facilité des enfants très jeunes changent de langues selon leur séjour dans un pays ou un autre.

Dans un discours inaugural prononcé le 17 novembre 1948 à l'occasion de l'anniversaire de la fondation de l'Université d'Ibadan, le Dr Paul Christophersen fit part de l'expérience tentée dans une école de filles d'Istanbul:

« Un jardin d'enfants fut ouvert avec un effectif de 20 élèves, gardiens et filles, âgés de 7 ans en moyenne. Un large éventail de nationalités y était représenté, parmi lesquelles on comptait des Turcs, des Grecs, des Juifs, des Arméniens, des Irakiens, des Syriens et des Bulgares. Tous ces enfants, à l'exception de quelques Anglais les Américains, ignoraient totalement la langue anglaise à leur admission au jardin. Us parlaient en tout quelques 15 langues différentes. Entre eux n'existait de ce fait aucune langue commune, ce qui fit qu'on leur fit l'enseignement uniquement en anglais et avec un maître anglais. Je dois ajouter que le reste du personnel était anglais ou de langue anglaise et que dans le reste de l'école il y avait beaucoup d'enfants parlant l'anglais. Aucune méthode formelle ne fut appliquée dans l'enseignement, et Ton ne fit jamais référence à la grammaire. Le maître leur parlait dans un anglais simple, mais correct et idiomatique. Le résultat obtenu peut paraître presque miraculeux. Au bout de neuf mois, ces enfants étaient devenus des Anglais, quant à leur langue. Pendant les heures de classe, dans la cour de récréation, à table on n'utilisait que l'anglais, et il n'y avait aucun signe de traduction mentale ou aucune ne sorte de surmenage intellectuel. Rentres chez eux, ces enfants parlaient chacun sa propre langue, comme auparavant, mais à l'école ils s'exprimaient en anglais, avec tout autant de facilité sinon davantage.»

Un autre pays où le problème linguistique se présente est Israël. Les juifs

de la Diaspora sont disperses, comme nous le savons, à travers l'Europe, l'Est, l'Afrique du Nord et le nord et le sud de l'Amérique. Dans chaque pays ils utilisent la langue locale dans leurs activités et l'ancien hébreu, tel que le conservent leurs livres sacrés, à des fins religieuses. Lorsque le mouvement du « Retour » commença, les juifs arrivant en Israël constituaient, sur le plan linguistique et culturel, un ensemble bigarre, en dépit de leur communauté de religion et de race. C'est à ce moment que naquit l'idée de cimenter l'unité nationale en transformant l'ancien hébreu en une langue moderne, une langue qui servirait non seulement à l'usage quotidien, mais encore d'expression artistique et scientifique.

On a constaté en Israël que non seulement (l'acquisition de cette langue supplémen- taire était plus aisée pour les plus jeunes, mais que les enfants pouvaient jouer un rôle capital en contribuant à la répandre parmi les adultes.

Un ancien directeur général du Ministère israélien de l'Education et de la Culture apporte le témoignage suivant :

« On aurait pu penser que l'arrivée de centaines de milliers d'immigrants, parlant 70 langues différentes, mettrait en péril le long et patient effort entrepris pour ramener l'hébreu au rang de langue vivante d'usage quotidien. Le danger que représentait une tour de Babel linguistique a été évité du fait que le système d'éducation était suffisamment développé pour assurer d'une manière ou d'une autre, une rapide prise en charge des enfants d'immigrants. Tous ces enfants, parce qu'ils avaient besoin d'une langue commune pour communiquer entre eux, ont adopté l'hébreu avec une rapidité étonnante, et, de retour de leur jardin d'enfants ou de l'école, l'ont rapporté à leurs parents à la maison.»²¹

Un témoignage autorisé

S'il est quelqu'un de qualifié pour parler avec autorité de ce problème, c'est le professeur P. Christophersen, qui rapporte l'histoire mentionnée ci-dessus. Le Dr Christophersen est danois, Docteur ès Lettres de l'Université de Copenhague, donc verse dans sa propre langue. Il fait également autorité en anglais puisqu'il détient un autre titre de Docteur ès Lettres, cette fois-ci de l'Université de Cambridge. A l'époque où il donnait sa conférence, le Dr Christophersen était professeur d'anglais à l'Université d'Ibadan où il avait sous ses ordres d'autres professeurs d'anglais de nationalité britannique.

²¹ M. Avidor : Israël Aujourd'hui : N°1 : l'Enseignement et ses Problèmes

Quoiqu'étranger, il était reconnu par les Anglais eux-mêmes comme faisant autorité dans leur propre langue.

En ce qui concerne le problème d'enseigner plus d'une langue à la fois à des petits enfants, et à propos des objections soulevées centre ce principe, voici l'opinion dudit professeur :

« M est indubitable que dans plusieurs cas l'effort requis pour posséder deux langues au lieu d'une seule, diminue les capacités de l'enfant pour acquérir d'autres connaissances. Mais est-ce que " gain n'est pas assez grand pour mériter même un an ou deux de retard? Beaucoup de citoyens parmi les plus valables, atteignent leur maturité à un âge relativement avancé. Il faut se rappeler qu'en outre, le fait de commencer à apprendre les langues le plutôt possible, permet à l'adulte d'économiser plusieurs années d'un travail laborieux plus tard, à un âge où son énergie et son temps peuvent servir à un usage plus profitable.

« Je ne crois pas que l'ensemble d'arguments avarices centre le bilinguisme précoce soit solidement fondé, mais il est une objection sérieuse qui indique que l'adulte n'atteint jamais, dans l'une et l'autre langue, le degré de perfection qu'une personne monolingue peut atteindre dans sa propre langue. Le philologue autrichien Schickhardt a dit que si le bilingue a deux cordes à son arc, celles-ci sont plutôt lâches. Il y a certes du vrai dans cet argument, quoique, à mon avis, on lui ait accordé trop de valeur. Il faut rappeler que l'équilibre entre les deux langues d'un bilingue n'est pas quelque chose d'absolument statique; il lui arrive de varier selon les périodes. Un effort de volonté peut le modifier. Si un bilingue décide de concentrer ses efforts sur l'une des deux langues au détriment de l'autre, il peut atteindre 100% d'efficacité dans la première. Et il conservera toujours sur le monolingue l'avantage que lui confèrent ses connaissances dans l'autre langue.

« Dans le livre qu'il a consacré au langage, Jespersen pose la question suivante : « Est-ce qu'un enfant bilingue n'est jamais devenu un expert dans la langue, un poète ou un orateur? » La question relève de la rhétorique et n'attend pas de réponse, mais je lui en apporterai une. Oui, il y a maints exemples à citer où des personnes bilingues sont devenues de grands écrivains. Chez les anglophones, le premier nom qui vient à la bouche est celui de Conrad. A proprement parler, Conrad n'était pas bilingue dès son enfance; ce n'est qu'à l'âge de 17 ans qu'il mit pied pour la fois sur le sol britannique, et bien qu'il eut lu bon nombre de livres en anglais, la langue anglaise demeurait encore pour lui étrangère. Mais il en fit sa première langue

et relégua partiellement son idiome maternel, le polonais, au second plan. Si nous demandons l'exemple d'un bilingue dès l'enfance, il y a celui de Hilaire Belloc, qui, après avoir été élève partiellement en France et en Angleterre, décida de s'établir dans ce dernier pays et d'approfondir l'anglais, langue dans laquelle il a écrit des poésies et de la prose. Plus près de nous il y a le cas de Rabindranath Tagore qui a écrit principalement en bengali, mais a traduit quelques-unes de ses œuvres en un anglais apprécié. Il convient aussi de citer à ce propos les écrivains écossais et irlandais qui se servent indifféremment de l'anglais et du gaélique pour s'exprimer, des Gallois qui utilisent tantôt l'anglais, tantôt le gallois. Il ne nous est pas indifférent dans ce domaine de constater que Milton, bien que à peine bilingue ou trilingue, ait écrit des poèmes en anglais, en italien et en latin, et que d'autre part, Gower, le poète médiéval, ait composé sa poésie en anglais, en français et en latin.

« On pourrait assurément allonger cette liste encore davantage. Mais cela pourrait ne pas forcément convaincre. Mais qu'on se rappelle que le nombre de personnes bilingues à travers le monde ne représente qu'une infime fraction de ceux qui ne sont que monolingues. Au total, les bilingues sont plus que honorablement représentés parmi les grands écrivains. »

Le témoignage de la logique

Le processus mental élémentaire au moyen duquel s'exprime la langue ne dépasse pas les capacités de l'enfant en bas âge.

Comme je l'ai dit plus haut, les processus logiques de base qui permettent & l'esprit d'acquérir une connaissance, sont de trois ordres.

En premier lieu, il y a la capacité d'abstraction qui permet la formation de concepts universels à partir d'objets concrets individualisés.

Ensuite, il y a le processus par lequel après avoir établi un accord ou une contradiction parmi deux concepts ainsi emmagasinés, l'esprit les unit ou les divise au moyen de « est » ou de « n'est pas », c'est-à-dire par une affirmation ou une négation.

La chauve-souris est un mammifère. La chauvesouris n'est pas un oiseau.

Enfin, il y a le processus par lequel l'esprit établit un accord ou une contradiction entre deux concepts en les comparant à un troisième et, par ce moyen, parvient à une nouvelle connaissance.

Les animaux qui allaitent leurs petits sont des mammifères. Or la chauve-souris allaite ses petits. Donc la chauve-souris est un mammifère.

En l'occurrence deux concepts, mammifère et chauve-souris, est

comparés à un troisième.- les animaux qui allaitent leurs Petits.

Tous les animaux qui allaitent leurs petits sont des mammifères. Ce qui a l'air très simple. Mais avant que les zoologues en arrivent à énoncer un principe aussi général, quelle somme d'observations et d'études de cas isolés ! Quelle dépense d'énergie physique et mentale!

En effet la poursuite de la connaissance ressemble fort à l'ascension d'une montagne : en examinant laborieusement les cas particuliers, nous escaladons les pentes exposées aux vents pour atteindre le sommet, parvenir au principe général; puis, nous servant de ce principe comme guide, nous redescendons pour découvrir les cas individuels situés sous le vent. L'ascension, ou [l'induction; le sommet, ou le principe universel; la descente, ou la déduction.

Le raisonnement qu'il parte du général au particulier, de l'abstrait au concret, de l'ensemble à la fraction, de la loi au fait, ou vice versa; qu'il soit déductif ou inductif, le raisonnement consiste à rechercher des causes, à tirer des conclusions, à résoudre des problèmes; toutes ces démarches représentent une tension constante pour l'esprit.

Mais aucun de ces processus n'intervient lorsqu'on apprend une langue. En enseignant une langue à des enfants, on ne demande pas à leur esprit à peine éclos de rechercher les causes prochaines ou ultimes des choses, de démêler des problèmes inextricables ou de découvrir des raisons cachées !

Le seul effort mental est celui qui suffit aux deux processus logiques de base qu'entraînent la compréhension et le jugement, à savoir, la capacité de former des images mentales, puis d'en tirer un concept, et la capacité d'observer que certains concepts sont liés et que d'autres ne le sont pas.

N'est-ce pas une preuve que cet effort mental reste à la portée de l'enfant, le fait qu'à partir de l'âge de trois ans environs, il devient très bavard, fait souvent montre d'intelligence et expose ses vues avec une candeur qui surprend, sinon embarrasse même les adultes?

La capacité d'apprendre le sens des mots et celle de les utiliser pour exprimer quelque chose à propos d'autre chose, voilà les opérations logiques élémentaires qui sont requises pour apprendre une langue, et ces opérations sont suffisamment simples pour des enfants à l'esprit encore frêle.

La difficulté qui se présente dans cette initiation au bilinguisme réside dans le fait pour l'enfant d'avoir à apprendre au moins deux mots pour chacun des concepts et deux séries de phrases-types. Chaque langue, en effet, n'a pas seulement son propre vocabulaire, mais aussi ses propres régies syntaxiques, sa propre manière de construire les phrases.

En pareille situation, la régie essentielle à suivre doit être la suivante : éviter de confondre les choses.

J'ai dit plus haut qu'il était possible à un enfant d'apprendre en même temps une langue au contact de ses parents à la maison, une seconde avec ses camarades dans la rue et une troisième par l'intermédiaire de son maître à l'école. Ses parents et la maison, ses camarades et la rue, le maître et l'école, voilà trois catégories de personnes et de lieux que l'enfant rattache étroitement à une langue déterminée, et qui s'y rapportent effectivement. Chaque fois qu'il est placé dans l'une de ces circonstances, l'enfant branche son esprit sur la langue correspondante, aussi naturellement que nous branchons notre radio d'une station à l'autre. En fait, il ne réalise même pas qu'il parle trois langues différentes, à moins qu'on ne le lui explique ou qu'il ait atteint l'âge de le comprendre.

La confusion s'installe lorsqu'une seule et même personne s'adresse à l'enfant indistinctement dans l'une et l'autre langue.

En initiant l'enfant au bilinguisme, il faudra par conséquent bien prendre soin de rattacher chaque langue, dans l'esprit de l'enfant, à des personnes, à un cadre et à des circonstances bien déterminés.

L'esprit de l'enfant s'ouvre tôt aux langues et s'avère très tôt capable du processus logique nécessaire au langage. Force m'est donc de constater qu'aucun argument sérieux, basé sur la maturité nécessaire à la capacité d'apprendre une langue, ne peut s'opposer au bilinguisme précoce.

Le témoignage de la psychologie

Lorsqu'on apprend une langue, ou toute autre chose, le but est de retenir la matière apprise, de pouvoir la remémorer consciemment ou inconsciemment, immédiatement ou moyennant un effort, de pouvoir la reconnaître en l'entendant ou en la voyant. La faculté mentale qui retient, reproduit ou reconnaît ce qui a été appris, c'est la mémoire.

C'est la faculté qui suit en importance pour ce qui est de la connaissance, la première qui est naturellement (l'intellect ou la compréhension. En effet, quelle que soit la fidélité de la mémoire, même si Ton a bien retenu ce qu'on a appris, même si on peut le remémorer rapidement ou le reconnaître facilement, cela ne sert à rien si la chose dont il s'agit n'a pas été bien comprise au départ.

De même, on a beau comprendre parfaitement ce que l'on apprend, cette connaissance ne sert à rien si elle s'évanouit aussitôt de l'esprit.

Et cependant l'un des premiers principes de mémorisation est que mieux on comprend quelque chose, plus facilement on la retient.

Quant à la nature de la mémoire, il y a des différences d'opinion. Certains disent que c'est une faculté entièrement spirituelle; d'autres, qu'il s'agit d'une faculté entièrement organique; à mi-chemin, une autre école soutient que cette faculté est à la fois spirituelle et organique, que c'est un complexe psycho-physique. Il y a aussi l'opinion courante qui pense que la mémoire s'affaiblit au fur et à mesure qu'on avance en âge, opinion qui a été scientifiquement démentie de nos jours. Quelles que soient les divergences d'opinions, il est cependant certains points qui demeurent clairs.

Parmi ceux-ci, il est reconnu que l'âme se sert du corps comme d'un instrument, et de ce fait, même si la mémoire est une faculté purement spirituelle, elle ne peut fonctionner indépendamment des sens, des nerfs du cerveau. En fait l'observation démontre que les lésions cérébrales, la fièvre ou d'autres maladies du cerveau affectent généralement la mémoire de manière frappante, alors que les autres facultés mentales ne sont pas atteintes. Pour prendre un autre exemple, certaines périodes de la vie, certaines sortes d'expériences, des idiomes particuliers ont été, dans certains cas, brusquement effacés de la mémoire, à cause d'une atteinte physique portée au cerveau.

On ne peut donc mettre en question le fait que la mémoire est une faculté étroitement liée à l'organisme physique. Et sur cette base, il s'ensuit tout normalement que l'état de l'organisme l'efficacité de cette faculté mentale.

En outre, en tant que matière, l'organisme se dégrade avec le temps. Quelle que soit la capacité d'énergie d'un travailleur, son rendement décroît forcément avec l'usure de ses outils.

A quelle période de la vie est-il établi que la mémoire soit la plus réceptive, la plus malléable et la plus capable d'acquérir ses habitudes les plus durables, ses souvenirs les plus persistants?

Chacun d'entre nous peut faire appel à son expérience personnelle pour affirmer que les souvenirs de son enfance sont parmi les plus marquants.

Par nature, l'acquisition d'une langue fait appel à la mémoire. Pour celui qui voudrait initier l'enfant à deux langues, la meilleure méthode serait de s'y prendre dès l'enfance.

Nous savons tous, par ailleurs, que l'étude n'est pas des plus aisées ni des plus rapides lorsque notre attention est sollicitée de toutes parts et que notre esprit est déchiré entre d'innombrables soucis.

Nous savons également que d'année en année les d'un homme s'accroissent, en même temps que ses problèmes, ses ennuis, ses craintes, ses espoirs et ses desseins. Doit-on s'étonner, de ce fait, que l'étude nous devienne plus difficile au fur et à mesure que nous avançons en âge? Il est normal que, accablé par tant de préoccupations, la mémoire ne parvienne pas à donner son maximum, et ceci, quelle que soit sa vigueur.

Pour le jeune étudiant, ces soucis ne l'épargnent pas jusqu'à ce qu'il ait atteint l'âge adulte; ils l'assaillent dès le début de ses études secondaires : des nouvelles matières se présentent, les anciennes deviennent plus difficiles, un effort plus soutenu est exigé, les programmes surchargés requièrent une rapidité plus grande, on rivalise pour les premières places, et le spectre du baccalauréat ou du G. C. E. se dessine déjà à l'horizon.

En comparaison avec tout cela, comme l'enfance est libre de tous soucis !

Une période où l'organisme physique, l'instrument de la, est nouveau, sain, vigoureux, très malléable, encore intact du poids des ans; une période où l'esprit n'est pas encombré, libre des soucis et des angoisses; une période où la mémoire s'utilise avec le maximum d'efficacité — telle est l'enfance.

Je me demande s'il peut y avoir une autre période plus appropriée que celle-ci pour initier l'enfant à l'usage de deux langues.

Nous tirons, par conséquent, de la nature même de la mémoire un argument solide en faveur du bilinguisme précoce.

Voici une autre considération des plus importantes qui renforce encore cet argument.

Comme je l'indiquais auparavant, la langue a un tel pouvoir sur l'esprit que les mots, en dernière analyse, fusionnent complètement avec les idées qu'ils représentent, que nous ne pouvons penser que par le moyen du vocabulaire de la langue qui a forme et façonne notre esprit. Ceci est d'autant plus remarquable chez les personnes monolingues.

J'ai déjà rappelé que chaque langue a, outre son vocabulaire propre, son système syntaxique particulier, ses propres régies disposant l'ordre des mots dans la phrase.

Dans une langue comme le latin, où les désinences déterminent la relation des mots entre eux, et, de ce fait, jouent un rôle important, la place des mots dans une phrase importe peu.

Brutus occident Cassarem.

Brutus Caesarem occident.

Caesarem occident Brutus.

Vous pouvez jongler avec ces trois mots autant qu'il vous plaira, mais quel que soit l'ordre que vous leur donnez, ils n'auront jamais qu'une seule et unique signification :

Brutus tua César.

Vous ne pouvez-vous permettre d'en faire autant en français:

Brutus tua César.

César tua Brutus.

Quelle altération profonde dans le sens apporte ce changement dans l'ordre des mots !

Sujet, verbe, objet: tel est l'ordre élémentaire des mots dans la phrase anglaise.

Le français suit le même ordre, mais comporte d'abondants idiotismes, tel que l'objet qui précède le verbe lorsque c'est un pronom, tel que la stricte concordance des genres, tel que l'adjectif qui suit généralement le nom, avec lequel il s'accorde en genre et en nombre, tel que la formule interrogative distincte, et tous ces nombreux traits qui différencient le français de son proche voisin d'Outre-manche.

Comme je l'ai indiqué plus haut, tous nos efforts, lorsque nous apprenons une langue, tendent avant tout à nous faire acquérir les automatismes de la langue, c'est-à-dire à exercer notre esprit et notre mémoire si parfaitement dans le maniement du vocabulaire et de la phraséologie de cette langue qu'il nous suffise d'exprimer verbalement notre pensée pour qu'aussitôt les mots nécessaires s'ordonnent correctement dans la phrase.

Le processus qui fait acquérir des habitudes verbales se d'éclanche des que l'enfant commence à parler et, au fur et à mesure des années, une véritable cristallisation linguistique s'opère, surtout si Ton n'a affaire qu'à une seule langue; l'esprit, jusqu'alors terre vierge, prend l'aspect d'un champ labouré selon un tracé défini de sillons et d'arrêtes, et sème de graines déterminées. Et bientôt, cette forme imposée à l'esprit par une langue détermine, se cristallise, se durcit et devient non seulement spécifique mais permanente. L'esprit et la mémoire semblent désormais fixes ensemble dans une cuirasse, parce que notre pensée s'est liée de façon inséparable au vocabulaire et à la phraséologie d'une langue donnée.

Après cette mutation, apprendre une seconde langue devient une tâche pénible et ennuyeuse, car le terrain n'est plus vierge, le sol est labouré et semé, la première langue s'est fermement installée, laissant peu d'espace au nouvel arrivant.

Les habitudes acquises du fait de la première langue s'opposent donc à l'acquisition pratique des habitudes de parler de la seconde langue.

Il m'est arrivé d'enseigner l'anglais à des élèves d'un collège qui avaient abordé la langue assez tardivement. Ma tâche fut des plus pénibles car ce que la plupart d'entre eux parlaient ou écrivaient n'était pas de l'anglais mais une langue africaine revêtue de mots anglais.

La cristallisation linguistique explique pourquoi la plupart des gens, après leur enfance, perdent toute capacité d'apprendre une langue étrangère parfaitement.

La seule politique sensée est, par conséquent, d'initier l'enfant au bilinguisme avant que son esprit ne se soit solidifié, de commencer dans la tendre enfance, alors que l'esprit et la mémoire, encore malléables, ne connaissent pas les sollicitations diverses.

Le témoignage psychologique

La langue, ainsi que je l'ai dit plus haut, est un complexe de sons et de sens. Ainsi qu'il existe des habitudes mentales que les usagers d'une langue cultivent au contact constant du vocabulaire et de la phraséologie de cette langue, de la même façon cultivent-ils d'autres habitudes, physiques celles-là et tout aussi déterminées, en exerçant constamment leurs organes oraux sur la phonologie de cette langue.

Chaque son qui sort de la bouche, aussi chargé de sens soit-il, n'est autre chose, sur le plan de sa composition matérielle, que de l'air rejeté par les poumons et expulsé par le système respiratoire. Afin de bien mesurer l'importance de cet aspect physiologique de la parole, nous allons suivre le trajet parcouru par cette bouffée d'air à travers l'organisme.

En quittant les poumons, cette bouffée d'air remonte les bronches jusqu'au larynx, cette cavité de la gorge où sont logées nos cordes vocales. Ces cordes glottiques, comme on les dénomme également, sont deux petites membranes, quasi horizontales et très sensibles. En se rapprochant ou en s'écartant l'une de l'autre, ou en vibrant comme les cordes d'un instrument de musique, les cordes vocales produisent la voix. Elles se tendent ou se relâchent dans le sens de la longueur et par ces variations dans leur longueur

elles varient dans leur tension, ce qui entraine une variation dans leur tonalité.

A partir de la cavité vocale, l'air passe par la luette (cet organe mou, pointu et mobile qui prend naissance dans le fond du palais) pour pénétrer dans la principale caisse de résonance, formée des parties dures et molles du palais, la langue, les dents et les lèvres, en d'autres termes, la bouche. C'est la constante variation de la forme de cette caisse de résonance, provoquée par l'extrême mobilité de la langue, qui confère à l'air ainsi expulsé la qualité spécifique du son. Très souvent, le nez sert de seconde caisse de résonance, plus particulièrement dans le cas des sons tels que les sons nasalisés en français pour la prononciation desquels l'air est expulsé simultanément par la bouche et le nez.

De l'examen de ce mécanisme générateur de la parole, on peut tirer deux conclusions :

La première c'est que, du moment que le souffle doit, pour devenir un son, traverser tout le système respiratoire, des poumons jusqu'à la bouche, la production d'un seul son entraîne le mouvement coordonné, non seulement des organes de la parole eux-mêmes, mais aussi de tous les autres muscles dont ils dépendent.

En fait il serait intéressant de les compter tous afin de se rendre compte du nombre de muscles mis en mouvement dans l'acte de la parole et de calculer la quantité d'énergie dépensée par le fait de parler, durant un temps déterminé.

En deuxième lieu, puisque chaque langue contient un nombre déterminé de sons oraux, un usage constant et prolongé de ces organes de la parole sur la même échelle de sons, produit des habitudes physiques du parler correspondant à ces mêmes sons.

Lorsqu'on examine le nombre de sons que contient chaque langue, et le grand nombre de langues qui existent dans le monde, on réalise l'impressionnante variété de sons qu'on peut rencontrer, même si l'on excepte ceux qui sont communs à toutes ces langues.

Aucun enfant, avant d'apprendre à parler, n'est déterminé d'avance pour une langue quelconque, - un nouveau-né qu'on transfère aussitôt après sa naissance à des milliers de kilomètres de distance et qu'on coupe complètement de son pays de naissance, ne saura jamais quelle est sa langue maternelle. Quel que soit le chemin profond par lequel elle passe pour pénétrer dans l'esprit, la langue n'est en définitive qu'une habitude acquise et non pas une propriété innée.

De ce qui précède, je conclus que tout enfant a la capacité d'apprendre à

prononcer chacun des innombrables sons qui composent les multiples langues de la terre.

Mais, comme je l'ai déjà dit, pour s'utiliser dans la pratique, chaque langue ne peut employer qu'un nombre limité de ces sons; et il en résulte que les organes de la parole des membres de ce groupe ne s'exercent à prononcer que ce nombre limite et n'acquièrent que les habitudes de parler correspondant à ces sons.

C'est dans ce cas, davantage que dans celui de l'action exercée par le vocabulaire et la phraséologie sur l'esprit et la mémoire, que la force de l'habitude produit ce phénomène que j'ai dénommé plus haut «cristallisation linguistique.» Et il s'agit d'un phénomène qui soi produit tôt dans la vie.

Lorsque les muscles des organes de la parole se sont liés de manière permanente et exclusive à une série donnée de mouvements requis pour produire les sons propres à une langue, toutes les autres habitudes de mouvements sont inhibées de façon plus ou moins permanente; elles sont, pour ainsi dire, refoulées et jalousement écartées par la série qui s'est installée.

C'est cette cristallisation linguistique, cette rigidité des organes de la parole qui rend si difficile l'acquisition des nouveaux sons d'une langue étrangère, une fois dépassée la tendre jeunesse. Mais à cet âge, lorsque les organes de la parole sont encore malléables, on peut les habituer à prononcer correctement les sons de deux ou trois langues différentes, ou même de quatre.

N'est-il pas logique, sagement clairvoyant, avec l'assurance d'obtenir les meilleurs résultats et la garantie d'un gain de temps et d'énergie, que d'initier les enfants au bilinguisme avant cette période de cristallisation?

L'immense avantage de commencer de bonne heure, en ce qui concerne la phonologie, c'est que, une fois acquises, les habitudes de prononciation ne se perdent jamais complètement. Même si l'on perd l'aisance, la connaissance n'en demeure pas moins.

Sur le plan physiologique donc, il existe un argument solide en faveur du bilinguisme précoce.

Le témoignage de l'expérience personnelle

Lorsque le professeur Christophersen affirme que commencer de bonne heure l'étude des langues peut épargner à l'adulte des années de travail pénible, à un âge où son énergie et son temps peuvent être mieux utilisés, je

suis absolument d'accord avec lui. J'ai eu personnellement l'expérience de ce qu'il dit.

Quand j'étais écolier on n'apprenait le français ni à l'école primaire, ni dans le secondaire. Je n'ai commencé l'étude du français que des années après, et par moi-même. J'avais 27 ans. Les Camerounais revendiquaient déjà la réunification et il allait de soi que dans un Cameroun réunifié il serait nécessaire de connaître le français et de le connaître bien.

Pendant 10 ans j'ai travaillé dans ce sens sans relâche, avec une détermination et un effort intenses que je n'avais jamais mis dans quoique ce soit d'autre. Trois ans après avoir débuté, je suis allé à l'Université et j'ai pris le français comme une des matières de spécialisation (honours). Après la licence, je fis un mémoire pour le « Master of Arts » et une thèse de doctorat. J'ai écrit les deux en français. Pendant mes études universitaires j'ai passé deux années en France dont l'une à la Sorbonne.

Et pourtant, malgré cet effort soutenu, malgré ces jours laborieux, malgré cette attention et cette concentration, ces exercices de conversation, d'écriture et de corrections, je n'ai pas réussi à parler le français couramment et il n'y a guère de chances que j'y réussisse un jour.

Pourquoi?

Parce que j'ai commencé tard.

J'ai donné quelques conférences en français, mais chaque fois j'ai dû choisir la pénible méthode de tout rédiger et de lire mon texte au lieu de parler à mon aise.

Dix ans de travail opiniâtre, dix ans qui auraient pu être employés à la physique, aux mathématiques, à la médecine ou polytechnique — des études qui m'auraient rendu plus utilisable dans la cite moderne — 10 ans gaspillés pour des études qui n'avaient qu'un rôle préparatoire, des études que j'aurais pu faire des années plus tôt !

Je suis certain qu'un enfant de cinq ans, d'une intelligence moyenne qu'on aurait initié aux deux langues, par des professeurs compétents, dans de bonnes conditions, avec les manuels appropriés, aurait, dans le même temps acquis dans le maniement de ces deux langues une aisance que je n'ai pu obtenir, moi, en fournissant cinq fois plus d'effort que cet enfant !

Un système d'éducation bilingue

Cet article souligne la nécessité d'un bilinguisme précoce, c'est-à-dire dès l'école primaire. Mais mon étude ne serait pas complète si je ne disais quelle

est la route à suivre à partir de là, quelle direction doit prendre le bilinguisme, quelle place doit-il occuper dans le système d'éducation au Cameroun.

Pour rendre claire ma réponse il faut que je précise que, à mon avis, notre système d'éducation doit comprendre :

L'école primaire; l'école secondaire;

Le « *Sixth Form* »;²²

L'Université.

L'éducation a été succinctement définie comme: le développement physique, moral et intellectuel de l'homme. Jusqu'ici et dans ce qui suit, je ne m'intéresse bien sûr qu'à l'aspect intellectuel de l'éducation.

En ce qui concerne la formation de l'esprit, ma thèse est donc que, à travers toutes ses activités, l'école primaire doit avant tout donner aux enfants une solide assise linguistique; les doter d'un fonds de vocabulaire utilisable **ici** et une bonne base de grammaire fondamentale.

Le but principal de l'école secondaire est d'introduire les enfants aux différentes branches du savoir nécessaire à la vie dans le monde moderne. Par cette même voie et par des cours spécifiques de langue et de littérature, il faut approfondir et élargir cette base initiale, et parfaire la connaissance de la structure du langage.

Parce que notre pays est sous-développé, il a besoin par-dessus tout de citoyens spécialisés; il ne suffit pas que notre enseignement supérieur produise des hommes qui sachent un peu de tout et qui ne connaissent rien à fond. Il vaut mieux qu'il s'organise pour produire des spécialistes dans tous les domaines. Voilà pourquoi je suis convaincu que le « *Sixth Form, the School of Arts and Science* » doit obtenir une place de choix dans notre système. Comme il n'existe pas au Cameroun oriental, il faudrait songer à l'introduire. Il suffirait de rassembler dans une même institution le deuxième bac et la propédeutique.

C'est dans le « *Sixth Form* » que doit commencer la spécialisation; car IE rôle de cette section du système doit être d'amener les étudiants à être bien d'attaque pour commencer des travaux universitaires efficaces. L'importance de ce que je dis ici sera appréciée par ceux d'entre nous qui ont fait des études en Europe. Car nous savons les difficultés que les uns ont subies et même les tragédies qui en ont ruiné d'autres, seulement parce qu'ils n'étaient

²² Le *Sixth Form*, dans le système britannique, est une période de deux à trois ans après le cycle secondaire. Il introduit l'étudiant à la spécialisation qu'il suivra à l'Université. Au Cameroun Occidental, une école de ce genre existe à Bambui : *The School of Arts and Science*.

pas préparés à ces études avant de quitter notre pays !

En résumé la préoccupation majeure de l'école primaire doit être le langage, celle de l'école secondaire, la culture générale, celle du « Sixth Form » l'introduction à la spécialisation, et celle de l'Université, la spécialisation intensive.

Quelle doit être la place du bilinguisme dans ce système?

Mon point de vue, que je répéterai inlassablement est que l'anglais et le français doivent être enseignés ensemble dès le commencement de l'école primaire. Mais la situation est telle que dans chaque région fédérée du Cameroun, l'une de ces deux langues est déjà dominante. C'est pourquoi bien que les deux langues seront enseignées, la langue dominante restera la langue de (l'instruction des autres matières.

Dans l'école secondaire, l'étude des deux langues sera intensifiée, mais la langue dominante restera toujours celle de l'instruction générale. A ce stade il serait bon que les étudiants qui manifesteraient des aptitudes particulières puissent apprendre le latin, voire même le grec. Car la compréhension du latin surtout, approfondit sensiblement la connaissance du français et de l'anglais.

Dans le « Sixth Form » la langue dominante reste toujours celle de l'instruction. Mais comme le but principal de ce cycle est d'introduire à la spécialisation, chaque étudiant suivra la section de la deuxième langue qui a trait à sa spécialité : les étudiants de sciences, au West Cameroon, s'initieront au français scientifique, ceux qui feront le droit, au français juridique, etc. Si ce travail se fait avec diligence et profondeur, l'étudiant arrivant à l'Université Fédérale sera prêt à suivre des cours dans l'une ou l'autre langue. —

S'il va faire ses études à l'étranger, il aura le singulier avantage de pouvoir choisir entre toutes les Universités tant françaises qu'anglaises.

J'avais un camarade Bengali qui avait été élevé dans l'île Maurice, qui est bilingue comme chacun sait. Il était venu en Grande-Bretagne pour faire la médecine. Comme il n'y avait de place nulle part, il traversa la Manche et s'inscrivit à la Faculté de Médecine de Paris.

Dans certaines universités britanniques il est obligatoire pour les étudiants qui suivent des programmes de spécialisation (honours) en sciences ou en lettres, de connaître l'anglais ou l'allemand. J'ai vu des étudiants africains ployant sous un horaire déjà trop chargé, et qui se débattaient désespérément pour apprendre l'anglais de surcroît. Résultat : beaucoup de perte de temps qui aurait pu être employé à l'essentiel du programme.

Résultat : un grade inférieur à celui qui aurait pu être obtenu.

L'Université débutant à Yaoundé est supposée être une université bilingue. Mais encore faut-il définir ce bilinguisme et s'efforcer d'appliquer cette définition des IE début; autrement l'élément deviendra tellement prédominant que l'Université Fédérale du Cameroun sera pratiquement une université française.

Normalement une université bilingue est une université dans laquelle un étudiant peut suivre des cours dans chacune des langues à son gré. C'est en fait une double université comme c'est le cas de l'Université de Louvain où l'IE néerlandais et l'IE français sont les deux langues d'enseignement. J'imagine qu'une telle université est très coûteuse à établir.

Le grand avantage du système bilingue que je préconise plus haut et qu'il rend ce type d'université inutile.

Puisque les étapes précédentes rendent l'étudiant déjà bilingue, et puisque le « Sixth Form » le prépare à se spécialiser dans les deux langues, il suffirait pour notre université bilingue, que les cours soient donnés indifféremment dans l'une ou l'autre langue et que, bien sûr, des professeurs appartenant à chacune soient représentés dans le corps enseignant.

Au surplus — et ceci est très important — il ne faut pas qu'une de ces langues ait une position officiellement privilégiée à l'intérieur de l'Université. C'est un fait que lorsque deux cultures se rencontrent de cette manière dans une institution, cela suscite des jalousies et des rivalités mesquines, et si l'on n'est pas vigilant ces rivalités peuvent dépasser la mesure et créer la confusion — une fraction culturelle essayant de contrôler l'université en s'emparant des postes de commande, en augmentant ses effectifs, en imposant sa langue au détriment de l'autre.

Il faut se mettre en garde contre cette tendance dans toutes les institutions de notre République Fédérale; autrement au lieu de réussir cette expérience de l'intégration culturelle au Cameroun, nous ferons de ce pays un champ de bataille culturelle.

Une bonne partie du temps et de l'énergie consacrés à une langue sont généralement utilisés, surtout dans les cycles supérieurs, à l'étude des littératures. Ceci est d'une importance capitale surtout dans les pays auxquels appartiennent les langues, non seulement parce que les étudiants assimilent pour les imiter les meilleurs échantillons de cette langue, mais encore parce que l'étude de la littérature d'un pays imprègne la jeunesse de l'esprit national. Car la littérature est la voix et la mémoire d'un peuple, une influence vivante qui en infusant le même esprit dans chaque génération qui passe, préserve la

personnalité de ce peuple contre les ravages du temps.

Mais nous, puisque nous ne sommes ni français, ni anglais, notre politique vis-à-vis de ces deux langues doit être franchement utilitaire; il faut seulement les considérer comme des outils qu'il faut apprendre à manier avec une suprême maîtrise.

Par conséquent, à travers notre système d'éducation, en ce qui concerne l'anglais et le français, il faut insister davantage sur la langue que sur la littérature. Le but à atteindre sera que l'étudiant en plus d'un large vocabulaire bien assimilé, puisse parler avec une correction parfaite, l'accent tonique a la bonne place, le rythme, l'articulation et l'intonation adéquates; qu'il puisse maîtriser les principes de la composition. Et la littérature en même temps qu'elle leur donne une nourriture pour l'esprit et le cœur (car toute vraiment bonne, quel que soit son origine, a quelque chose à offrir à tout être humain) leur fournira surtout des exemples de style propres à être imités. Car un de nos objectifs, en adoptant ces langues, c'est de les utiliser afin de forger notre littérature à nous.

Il sera aussi très important de préserver des liens culturels avec l'Angleterre et la France, il est nécessaire que les langues qu'on parle ici correspondent, dans le sens et dans l'intonation, aussi étroitement que possible avec celles qui sont parlées dans le pays d'origine.

L'atmosphère camerounaise idéale pour le bilinguisme

Dans les principaux pays bilingues, Canada, Belgique, Afrique du Sud, il y a des facteurs qui militent non seulement contre l'assimilation de deux langues par chacun des citoyens, mais aussi contre le bilinguisme harmonieux de l'Etat lui-même.

Parmi ces facteurs, peut se trouver le fait qu'une de ces langues n'est pas une langue véhiculaire à l'échelon continental ou mondial. C'est le cas du néerlandais avec ses variantes, le flamand et l'africains. Les Hollandais eux-mêmes sont conscients de cela au point qu'ils sont devenus les plus parfaits polyglottes à ce jour; car presque chaque Hollandais qu'on rencontre, parle au moins deux langues, et plus souvent trois ou quatre. L'étroitesse de leur pays et sa nature difficile les obligent à maintenir des relations avec leurs voisins plus nombreux pour survivre et subsister; d'où leur tendance à être polyglottes.

La même chose se constate chez les français du Nouveau Monde; car les cinq millions de Canadiens français séparés de leur patrie culturelle par

l'Atlantique sont assaillis par un océan culturel anglo-saxon gros de 200 millions d'hommes. Ainsi, un canadien anglophone n'a pas de stimulant pour apprendre le français, sauf pour sa culture personnelle ou pour des voyages en Europe ou en Afrique francophone.

Ce n'est pas le cas du bilinguisme camerounais. Le français et l'anglais sont d'une telle importance en Afrique et dans le monde que ce seul fait suffit pour qu'on désire l'apprendre à toute force.

Une deuxième et épineuse barrière contre laquelle se heurte le bilinguisme dans ce pays est que, là, chaque langue est la propriété d'un groupe national ou racial. Elle doit sa naissance à ce groupe; elle est le véhicule de sa culture, le sceau de son identité, l'expression de sa personnalité distinctive, la racine qui l'ancre dans le passé, le cordon ombilical qui le rattache à ses ancêtres. Par conséquent cette langue occupe une place de choix dans son esprit et dans son cœur, et elle est l'objet d'un profond engagement, tant émotionnel qu'intellectuel. On ne peut pas y toucher avec quelque brusquerie, sans le piquer au vif. Ainsi une menace ou un mépris dirigé contre cette langue par les protagonistes de la rivale plus favorisée, excite des passions violentes. Témoins, les émeutes sanglantes à Ceylan, les troubles linguistiques qui ont renversé naguère un Gouvernement en Belgique, l'état d'ébullition continue au Canada où quelques bombes ont déjà éclaté.

Lorsque les choses en arrivent à ce point, elles excitent non simplement la volonté de défendre la langue menacée, mais aussi une hostilité brûlante contre celle qui l'assaille. Aujourd'hui en Belgique il y a des flamands qui refusent de parler le français même quand ils le connaissent fort bien. Et pourtant il fut un temps où le français avait presque conquis la Flandre; il était devenu la langue de la bourgeoisie. Une réaction populaire cependant a renversé le courant et obtenu la loi de 1932 qui a reconnu le flamand comme langue officielle de la Flandre. Aujourd'hui les colères linguistiques ont atteint un tel degré que même un prédicateur risquerait de provoquer une profonde indignation et même une manifestation s'il tachait de parler en français devant ses ouailles flamandes.

Combien différente est la situation au Cameroun. Aucune de ces langues n'est la nôtre. Je ne vois pas en quoi se justifie un engagement passionnel quelconque d'un Camerounais vis-à-vis du français ou de l'anglais. Il sera étrange à l'extrême qu'un Camerounais se sente attaché à ces langues au point de déclencher une émeute ou de prendre les armes pour leur défense! Notre bilinguisme donc a le grand avantage que nous sommes en mesure de

l'aborder avec objectivité et détachement.

Un troisième facteur qui barre la route a un bilinguisme paisible, c'est lorsque, comme au Canada, l'Etat bilingue est né d'une guerre de conquête. Car alors plus souvent nous assistons de la part des conquérants a cette folie aveugle, a cette insolence arrogante, qui s'efforce d'imposer aux vaincus non seulement le régime mais encore la culture des vainqueurs. Cela éveille chez les vaincus une résistance acharnée qui au Canada français a abouti à un isolationnisme plein d'amertume. Un correspondant du magazine américain «Look» dans son numéro d'avril 1963 disait ceci à propos de la situation canadienne.

«Le jour n'arrivera jamais où tous les Canadiens seront bilingues. Même les Canadiens français ne s'attendent pas à cela. Mais ils croient à coup sûr que les deux langues méritent un statut égal et que la Confédération doit être basée sur le principe du bi-culturisme. Ils sentent que ce principe a été rejeté par une grande partie de la communauté anglophone.

« Il semble qu'ils ont raison. Pas plus tard que décembre dernier le doyen du Comité des Ecoles de Hamilton dans l'Ontario, disait qu'il ne fallait pas dépenser l'argent des contribuables pour « ménager ceux qui auraient dû apprendre l'anglais depuis 300 ans ». Dans une autre communauté de l'Ontario, des contribuables en colère ont fait enlever de force la signalisation routière qui était bilingue.

« Ces incidents portent à croire à la véracité des plaintes selon lesquelles les Canadiens français sont victimes de la discrimination. Après que le président du chemin de fer national eut expliqué pourquoi son organisation n'avait pas de vice-président canadien, des étudiants à Québec l'ont pendu en effigie, et Lester Pearson, leader du parti libéral, a réclamé une enquête sur le biculture-réisme au Canada.

« Une enquête de ce genre révélerait probablement que les Canadiens français jouent en effet dans le gouvernement, dans les affaires et dans l'Industrie, un rôle moins privilégié qu'ils ne le...

« La ferveur nationaliste des Canadiens francophones affecte la position de la minorité anglophone à Québec. Hugh MacLennan qui vit à Montréal n'est pas découragé par le nationalisme français, bien au contraire, il l'approuve et montre que les Canadiens ont toujours été scrupuleusement justes envers la minorité anglaise, mais il est peiné par les séparatistes et par ceux qui voudraient rejeter la nature biculturelle du Canada. Il croit, comme beaucoup d'ailleurs, que les racines de la vraie personnalité nationale

canadienne se trouvent dans le biculturalisme. »²³

Contrairement au Canada, la République Fédérale du Cameroun est née de la volonté profonde et unanime du peuple camerounais. Le bilinguisme Camerounais jouira de cet autre avantage que l'atmosphère entourant son développement ne sera pas viciée par les luttes partisans.

Il n'y a aucun autre pays, à ma connaissance, dont les augures en faveur du bilinguisme se présentent aussi favorablement qu'au Cameroun. Si nous réalisons ces avantages et nous efforçons de les renforcer, si nous nous mettons à l'œuvre avec détermination, énergie et méthode, il se peut un jour, malgré le niveau inférieur de notre bilinguisme, que nous donnions aux Beiges et aux Canadiens l'exemple d'une nation de citoyens bilingues, et fraternellement unis.

L'heure de l'effort

Lorsqu'on fournit la preuve qu'un bilinguisme précoce est la bonne politique, que le bien-fondé de cette politique se base sur l'expérience, qu'elle est prônée par des opinions autorisées, qu'elle s'appuie sur des arguments logiques, psychologiques et physiologiques, cela ne revient pas à déclarer qu'aucun obstacle ne se présentera sur le chemin qui conduit vers un bilinguisme parfait ou même moyen.

Il y a des difficultés, et elles sont de nature à nous décourager. Nous connaissons tous le travail fastidieux requis durant des années, même s'il s'agit d'une seule langue (ceci vaut également pour notre langue maternelle), pour acquérir le vocabulaire et la tournure des phrases, pour acquérir l'habileté de conférer à la parole force de persuasion et élégance. Us ne sont pas nombreux ceux qui y parviennent. La preuve en est la rareté, dans l'histoire du monde, des écrivains dont les œuvres persistent.

Par ailleurs, la bonne réalisation d'un pareil programme nécessite un grand nombre d'enseignants compétents et soigneusement préparés pour cette tâche, ainsi qu'un matériel énorme, notamment des manuels rédigés par des experts. Tout cela entraîne des dépenses imprévisibles.

En dépit de tous ces obstacles à surmonter, qui prétendrait raisonnablement remettre indéfiniment l'examen approfondi de la question? C'est précisément une connaissance complète de la nature du problème qui

²³ Look: Aprils, 1963: Ira Mothner: Crisis and Conflict in Canada.

permettra de déterminer les moyens et les méthodes requises pour lui trouver des solutions appropriées. Il nous est indispensable donc de l'étudier soigneusement, de mettre sur pied un programme exhaustif; et pendant que nous recherchons les moyens adéquats, il serait avisé de commencer avec les moyens du bord.

Je partage les vues du Dr Aggrey lorsqu'il dit:

Recherchez ce que vous voulez,
Prenez ce que vous trouvez,
Et utilisez-le pour obtenir
Davantage de ce que vous voulez.
Il est temps de se mettre à l'œuvre.

Ou bien nous prenons le taureau par les cornes en nous mettant immédiatement et vigoureusement à la tâche, ou le bilinguisme camerounais demeurera éternellement une vue de l'esprit.

Il ne convient pas de laisser les choses se faire d'elles-mêmes, ni de s'engager au hasard et à demi seulement, dans une entreprise d'envergure nationale, sans avoir fait des recherches approfondies et sur des bases scientifiques. Rien ne réussit sans préparation, sans une organisation réfléchie, sans méthode, sans une action énergique.

Si les arguments que je viens d'exposer en faveur du bilinguisme précoce ne parviennent pas à convaincre certains, ou même la majorité, il est au moins une raison qui devrait prévaloir au moins pour ce qui concerne le Cameroun. Cette considération, c'est que notre bilinguisme édicte dans la Constitution confère à notre pays une place particulière au sein des Etats africains; étant donné que, tôt ou tard, pour parvenir à son unité toute l'Afrique devra faire ce que nous avons fait. C'est pour nous une noble mission, une fierté et un privilège particuliers d'ouvrir la voie, en réalisant ici au Cameroun un bilinguisme réel et solide.

Dans cette entreprise, on attend de la République bilingue du Cameroun plus qu'un effort normal.

Imaginez la piètre figure que nous aurions aux yeux de l'Afrique et du monde, si nous manquions d'entrain pour cette tâche, écrasante certes, mais bien digne d'être accomplie.

Part VII
Idea of Literature

What is Art, what is Science, why are the Fine Arts fine, what are the intrinsic norms for classifying them in logical, hierarchical order, what the essence and substance of the Beautiful and the Sublime; what is Literature, what its intrinsic inherent characteristics, what its primordial purpose; are its norms of yesteryear, norms, thanks to which, certain writers of the past have become deathless; are these norms pertinent in our time and deserve careful study and application – these are the questions to which I have addressed myself in the article that follows. They are the burning issue of Literary Criticism today.

Literary Criticism, or Appreciation, or Analysis, whichever you please falls outside the sphere of rigid Mathematics; we are in the realm of Opinion where a hundred learned men can differ, where debate often loses its scientific and philosophic serenity and degenerates into impassioned wrangling.

And principles which have stood the test of time, and, until recently, were regarded as rather in the nature of things for centuries - principles like the primordial importance of a thorough knowledge of formal grammar for effective writing, like the need to master the principles of Prosody and Orthometry for sure success in poetic craftsmanship - these in certain quarters are being dumped, in School and College, on the scrap heap, or are held up to scorn as a startling irrelevance.

For my part, I believe that norms and uses that have proved their worth and efficacy, and have created immortal scholarship, should not be lightly dismissed with a supercilious wave of the hand, in the name of modernism.

I believe, for instance that, while poetry should continue to find new forms, the assiduous, sustained and thorough effort to master the English classics, to write according to the brain-racking rules of English poetic diction and rhythm and rhyme, entail so much mental energy and drudgery and strain that the votary, who braves the long-drawn labours successfully, will emerge from them, more often than not, with an abundant, wealthy and refined vocabulary; will emerge from them a more scientific, a more philosophical and seasoned scholar, with skills done to a turn, with works enriched with deeper thought and finer phrase.

Master the rules, then you can dump them - that is what I say.

For good writing is not the result of chance; it is the product of profound

Science, assiduous Application, and unswerving Purpose.

“Ce n’est pas assez de savoir la theologie pour ecrire la Tbeologie: il faut encore savoir ecrire, qui est une seconde science,” said Jean-Louis Guez de Balzac, Grand Epistolier de France.

For the corpus of the ultimate causes or principles or laws or canons of soul-stirring Literature constitute not only a Science but a philosophy.

Thus genuine Literary Criticism is neither the pouring of lavish praise, nor is it the pronouncement of sweeping condemnation. It is the fruit of a philosophical study and analysis of the text from all its bearings: each statement of either praise or blame must ne buttressed by solid, syllogistic reasons why. There is no room for passion here. Nor is there room for mindless judgments that spring without due ponderation from personal biases and preferences. Here unalloyed subjectivism is anathema.

Furthermore, I believe that any study, if it is to proceed surely must begin by a clear definition of the said subject. The teaching of Literature must begin by a clear and distinct enunciation and scrutiny of the essential characteristics of Literature; else a student can, after years in School and College, come out with a mind befogged, confused and confounded, in so far as this subject is concerned; can end up unable to say, for instance’ why a Religious text, a political address like Lincoln’s Second Inaugural, a work of History, a speech from the dock like the Apology of Socrates becomes a deathless utterance, becomes; Literature; and all this because he has no idea of what aesthetic pleasure is, no idea of the essential qualities that transform a work originally intended for other purposes into a literary masterpiece.

In the article that follows I have tried to give my own answers to the questions I have raised above. The article is in fact the first of ten chapters of an unpublished study at which I have laboured for six years and more to further this purpose, to foster worthy Literature and the instruction thereof. It is therefore addressed primarily to Learners and Teachers of Literature.

I invite readers of this article to tell me frankly, from reading this fragment, whether I should continue to toil at my text or whether I should dump it on the compost heap.

If the opinion is negative, let it be unsparing, let it be expressed without mincing words, but let it be bolstered by syllogistic reasoning, let it well from convictions felt profoundly.

Paul KODE:

Dr Fonlon, first of all, I would like to thank you for accepting to take

part in this programme. Our purpose is to enlighten Cameroonians interested in Creative Writing; those who have, within them, the spark which, well-tended, can burst into a flame and will make them poets, novelists, short story writers, dramatists, essayists, of sterling worth – in a word, makers of a literature of which Cameroon, tomorrow, will be proud.

Dr FONLON:

Well Paul, the thanks must be reciprocal, for your invitation to me to participate in this programme has made me to think a lot more; has made me to make more precise, in my mind, ideas that hitherto were vague. It will also entail a deal of effort to bring down to the level of the ordinary listener concepts which, more often than not, are wont to be couched in highfaluting terms. You are also to be congratulated for this effort to rouse interest in good writing among Cameroonians.

For, nowadays, what with so much emphasis on Science for Development, fellows are led to look on Letters as a luxury and not as a field vital for the well-being of society. In some quarters, Literature is under the weather, and when a Frenchman wants to speak with disdain about something he says “*ça c’est de la littérature*” airy nonsense; irrelevant rhetoric; so much sound and fury signifying nothing.

But, when you think of the immense and immeasurable influence that books like the Bible and the Koran have had on the lives of untold millions, the world over, through the ages; when you consider the fact before our very eyes, today, that almost three-quarters of the world has gone Communist, especially in Asia, thanks to Karl Marx’s *Das Kapital* when you consider the influence, less known but not less profound, that other works have had on other peoples, at other times; when you consider what the Civilization of the West owes to Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, you do not need a lengthy discourse to convince you about the overwhelming importance of Letters in the making of the world. That is why great thinkers have been both held in awe, on the one hand, and have been the victims of implacable hate, on the other: to the Romans, Vergil was not just a *poeta*; he was the *Vates* – the seer: Christ was the object of deep veneration: but the inveterate hatred of his enemies pursued him to the Cross; Socrates was condemned to drink hemlock and die; Gandhi was felled by a hail of bullets; Mohammed had his Hegira; Marx died in exile.

But their soul goes marching on.

Paul KODE:

Yes, indeed, the active influence of Thinkers and Scholars in the story of the world has been overwhelming and needs no belabouring.

Dr FONLON:

Their creative influence has been far-reaching but, it has also been a salutary iconoclasm. For creativity and iconoclasm for society, have been healthy – the influence of the one to build, the ‘influence of the other to destroy; their influence to gather, their influence to scatter. They love the Right. They hate the wrong. They foster the True, the Good and the Sublime. They make war on Evil. Indeed the genuine Thinker and Scholar, like Jeremy the Prophet, has a twofold mission:

*to pull down and destroy;
to plant and to build.*

The Irish poet, .Arthur O’Shanghnessy was far from bragging when in his poem, *The Music Makers*, he said this of poets, which can be aptly applied to Thinkers and Scholars at large:

*We are the movers and the shakers’
Of the world forever;
With wonderful deathless ditties
We build up the world’s great cities;
And out of a fabulous story
We fashion an empire’s glory*

*One man with a dream, at pleasure
Shall go forth and Conquer a crown;
And three with a new song’s measure
Can trample a Kingdom down.*

Paul KODE:

Indeed, as you have said, this is no idle swagger.

Dr. FONLON:

If you agree with me, as you have done, then tell *me* this:do you think the genius for creative writing is the special privilege of a chosen race or peoples;

is there any people so god-forsaken as to be denied, by the Creator, their own share of mind?

Paul KODE’:

I do not think so, because if our languages were written, if they were widely spoken, it would be evident that there is a wealth of wisdom in our folklore, as Chinua Achebe and other writers have proved.

Dr. FONLON:

Precisely. You could not have chosen a better word than folklore; for lore in English and wisdom, and folk means the people. Folklore then is a noble word which means the wisdom of the people, (although the French, as is their wont, have demeaned it to mean an inferior culture. “*ça*,” says a Frenchman superciliously, “*c’est du folklore*.”) So, you are convinced that Cameroon has her share of creative writers, even in the bud.

Paul KODE:

Unquestionably! Else I would not waste so much time and energy to further and foster a programme like this.

Dr. FONLON:

Perfectly right: and you have a great authority to support you, the writer of the famous Elegy, Thomas Gray:

*Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark caves of ocean bear:
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen
And waste its sweetness in the desert air.*

*Some village Hampden that, with dauntless breast,
The little tyrants of his fields withstood;
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country’s blood.*

So according to Gray, not even a remote country hamlet, deprived of all means of modern culture, lacks its share of talent. Yet, as the life of Gray himself proved, this talent needs to be cultivated in order to blossom and bloom; and it is precisely to participate in the essential work of the cultivation

of Cameroon talent, in order to foster Cameroon Literature, that you created this programme. Right?

Paul KODE:
Right

Dr. FONLON:

Do you not think it, therefore, necessary that we should begin with basic, fundamental principles in order to give our listeners a clear and precise idea of what Literature is, now that we have convinced them, I hope, of its overwhelming importance in the making of men and in the shaping of Society.

Paul KODE:

Of course, that would be the logical thing to do. However tell me this: we talked about the influence of Letters in the shaping of society; but what is their role, their importance in the making of man? I do not think we dwelt on that.

Dr. FONLON:

No, we did not. Of that we shall talk more at length later. But, talking about the importance of always beginning with first principles, of always beginning with ideas clear and precise, reminds me of a passage in Plato's book *The Laws*. In it there is a discussion between a philosopher, called Athenian Stranger, and two other men. At one point one of the party is so struck by the Philosopher's method of approach that he exclaims:

*Athenian Stranger, I will not call you
inhabitant of Attica, a, for you seem to
deserve the name of Athene herself
because you go back to first principles.*

Athene was the goddess of Philosophy and letters, among the Greeks and gave her name to Athens, the city of Philosophy', *par excellence*. Yes, if any discussion, any investigation, is to be fruitful, we must begin with first principles. Now talking about Literature, it is obvious to you, is it not, what the first of our first principles should be? If we want our listeners to profit from this conversation what do you think should be our very first task, our

very first preoccupation.

Paul KODE:

I presume it should be to let our readers know clearly and precisely, right from the start, what we mean by Literature.

Dr. FONLON:

Good man! What a down-to-earth answer! And yet, it is the first principle of any scientific discourse:, namely, that we should begin by defining our terms! How true is it to say that Philosophy is organised common-sense! That is what we will proceed to do: to tell our hearers what we mean by Literature

Paul KODE:

Yes, to my mind that would be the best way to tackle this question surely. It is not wise to take things for granted, to presume that we know when our knowledge is vague or cloudy.

Dr. FONLON:

I hold that the best way to know a word, to know it in depth, is to go to the root or roots of that word, that is, to take the word to parts and see what these mean singly and what they mean when, put together; to see what changes in meaning and use the total word has undergone with the passing time.

In my view, if students of language are ignorant of this exercise in etymological analysis and synthesis, words, for them, instead of being meaningful in themselves, will remain mere labels, meaningless in themselves. Do you agree with me in this?

PAUL KODE:

What you say sounds true, but if you gave a few examples to illustrate your point of view, I may be surer of my answer.

Dr. FONLON:

Right. Won't it be logical to begin with the word we set out to define, namely Literature?

Paul KODE:

Unquestionably.

Dr. FONLON:

The English word Literature is a thinly veiled version of the Latin word *Litteratura*. Now, *Litteratura* comes from the word *Littera* which means a written sign or mark which represents a sound. The plural of *Littera* is *Litterae*, that is, a set of signs or marks used in written language – the A B C or the alphabet. Alphabet comes from the names of the two first Greek letters – alpha and beta.

It is taken as in the nature of things that, more often than not, ideas, when written, are expressed with greater care than when they are spoken; furthermore, the written word is more permanent than the spoken word. Consequently, the word *Litterae* has come to mean, not merely a set of letters used in Language, but ideas expressed in writing with more meticulousness, with enhanced felicity; in other words, a corpus of learned ideas, learned works, learning, scholarship. That is why the highest honour that an English University can confer on a learned writer is the *Doctor Litterarum*, (D.Litt.), Doctor of Letters not to be confused with the French degree *Docteur es Lettres*, which is the Ph.D. in Literature: the D. Litt is a degree far above. In English itself we even speak of the *Littrati*, meaning Men of Letters, the pundits, the learned class as a whole.

Therefore, the word *Litterae*, Letters, refers not only to written signs used in a language but also to the corpus of learned work produced in that language.

To this we give the name of Literature. Has that brought us nearer to understanding what Literature is?

Paul KODE:

Yes. A long way. Yet you have not treated all the parts of the word. We now understand *Littera* and *Litterae* and the *Litterati*. You have still to explain the suffix *tura*, in English, *ture*, in the word *Litteratura*, Lite-rature.

Dr. FONLON:

That's no problem. The suffix *ure* in English comes from the Latin *ura*, *urae* and means, firstly, an action or a process secondly, the end-product or the end-result of that action and, thirdly, and sometimes, the dignity or rank conferred on him who possesses, eminently, the skill to wield the action which ends in the product. Thus *Litteratura* or Literature means the action of a skilful writer in plying his craft, or art, then the corpus of the scholarly works that he produces, and, thirdly the dignity of being a scholar, that is, scholarship.

Paul KODE:

When you use the word scholar, what do you mean exactly?

Dr. FONLON:

A good question. Formerly, and in popular use, the word scholar meant a schoolboy. Today, in universities in England, most especially in Oxford and Cambridge, it means an undergraduate, a student who enters the university after passing a highly competitive examination which entitles him to a scholarship or grant from an endowment or foundation. But, today, the word Scholar with a capital S is generally used, in a prestigious sense, to mean a learned person versed in Literature, especially Greek and Latin Literature or any other which has won a place of prestige in the Republic of Letters. I hope I have made myself clear.

Paul KODE:

So far, so good. But we were talking about abstract nouns in English ending in *ure* or in Latin in *ura*. Can you give me other examples.

Dr FONLON:

Surely. You have such words as *scriptura*, *sculptura*, *natura*. *Scriptura* (from *scribo*, *scribere*, *scripsi*, *scriptum* – I write, to write, I wrote, written) which means writing and then a body or written works – hence we speak of the Scriptures – the written works, *par excellence*. *Sculptura* (from *sculpo*, *sculpere*, *sculpsi*, *sculptum* – to carve) means the art of carving, and then the product of that skill, a carving. *Natura* (from *nasco*, *nasci*, *natus sum*), I am born, to be born, I was horn) means first a birth, and then that which is born: plant, animal or man; and, finally, it means the start, the sum total of the qualities of that which is born, and by extension, of all that is endowed with an essence –

a nature.

Are you now convinced with me that the best way to understand the meaning of a word is to dig to its roots?

Paul KODE:

Undoubtedly.

Dr. FONLON:

Seeing that a substantial portion of English vocabulary comes from Latin, and seeing the usefulness of etymological analysis and synthesis in the study of the English language, and more so, of French, do you agree with those teachers who tell students that Latin is a dead language and that the study of it is a useless, bootless exercise?

Paul KODE:

Not at all. Being a journalist, I wish I did it myself, seeing now, how useful it can be in a study in depth of Language and Literature.

Dr. FONLON:

There is a general tendency today to discredit things ancient. In English, for instance, the traditional studies of the time-tested theories of English grammar, or poetic and prose composition are cast aside for new-fangled untested opinions, with the result that standards are falling alarmingly. The idea seems to prevail that whatever is new must be true, must be better. To me such a view is sheer, absolute codology.

However, let that be. I hope from our analysis of the word Literature, you now understand what Literature is.

Paul KODE:

Certainly.

Dr. FONLON:

But that is not all. There is more to come before you get a clearer and more precise idea of what Literature is. We will learn, for instance, that Literature is one of the Fine Arts. We would therefore have to say what we mean by the word art and what makes an art fine.

Paul KODE:

This promises to be a thorough and exciting inquiry.

Dr. FONLON:

First of all, therefore, let us consider the word Art. What is an Art? I proceed to make answer, as I have done before by an etymological analysis.

We have said already, haven't we, that Literature entails a skill perfected to the utmost?

Paul KODE:

Yes, we have.

Dr. FONLON:

Then the riddle is already read! For the Latin word *Ars Artis*, from which the English word Art is derived, means precisely that: a skill in putting something together, a skill in creating, a skill in making something work.

As Roman culture became more perfect, more advanced, the meaning art, as a skill, was extended from the humdrum doings of daily into the field of aesthetic and intellectual enterprise – carving, painting, music, letters.

A logical rider that follows from the above statement is this – that the execution of any art, if such execution is to be perfect, demands knowledge of a relevant, corresponding corpus of principles to guide the artist surely, unerringly in the plying of his skill, in the achievement of his end.

Such a corpus of rules or principles or causes constitutes the science of that particular art. For every Art, therefore, there is a Science for counterpart. Isn't that to be taken as a matter of course?

Paul KODE:

Yes. But if we have to follow your method which insists so much on the definition of terms, even of those we take for granted, I would like to know what you mean exactly by science.

Dr. FONLON:

Following my method, I will begin with the root of the word. Science, in English, comes from the Latin *scio, scire, sciens, scientia* – I know, to know, knowing, knowledge. Science, at large, therefore, means knowledge – knowledge of the specific causes which produce a specific effect. If a skilled

music maker wants to produce music to make to make mirth, to make fellows jump up and dance, or to make them sit down and ponder pensively, or to make a full concert hall bring down the house with thunderous applause for full fifteen minutes – he does not achieve any of these ends by blind and haphazard groping, but by conscious knowledge of all the causes that produce, surely and unerringly each desired effect. It is only then that we can say that he possesses both the Science and the Art of Music.

Furthermore, the terms Art and Science are not restricted to the skill and the science alone. They are extended to embrace the concrete realisations of products of that Science and Skill. Thus the term Literature is not limited to the knowledge of the principles of literary creation, or to the creative skill of the writer, but also to the works themselves that are the concrete result of that Science and Art. However, tell me this, have you ever heard some arts referred to as the Fine Arts?

Paul KODE:

Yes, I have.

Dr. FONLON:

And what does the word *fine* mean in that context?

Paul KODE:

Well –yes – I guess it means nice.

Dr. FONLON:

Here is the Concise Oxford Dictionary; look that word up and read out the meaning.

Paul KODE:

Yes. Here it is. Fine: of high quality, clear, pure, refined, exquisitely fashioned.

Dr. FONLON:

Yes. Sir! .But tell me this: if a thing is of high quality, pure, refined, nicely fashioned, dainty in curve and shape, what single word, other than fine, would you use to qualify that thing! Simple! Obvious!

Paul KODE:
Beautiful?

Dr. FONLON:
Beautiful!

Paul KODE:
Yeah!

Dr. FONLON:

The Fine Arts are qualified as fine because each of them has this one essential characteristic – Beauty. Each is a manifestation, an expression, of the Beautiful in the universe. The French, more directly, call them *Les Beaux Arts*. The Beautiful Arts. But I prefer the English word Fine: it is more poetic, more concrete, evoking sight, hearing, touch and taste and scent. However, this lands us headlong into another inquiry, namely. What is Beauty or as the Schoolmen put it: *Quid sit pulchrum*? And they made answer: *Pulchrum est quod visum placet*; the Beautiful is that which pleases the eyes, the sight. Here sight is used in a generic and an analogical sense to represent, into the bargain, hearing, touch, taste and scent, in brief, perception by the senses. To these outer senses can be added the inner senses like imagination and memory, and, most especially, emotion.

Therefore, whatever gives pleasure to the senses whatever is easy on the ears, or the touch, or the tongue, or the scent is beautiful.

But the same Scholastic Philosophers laid down this principle *Nihil est in intellectu nisi quod prius fuit in sensu*. There is nothing in the mind except that which previously passed through the senses. Thus he who is born eyeless, earless, numb in body, tongue and scent, cannot appreciate the manifold beauty that bedecks the universe, neither can he who is born mindless, a bored moron, rotting of internal decay.

The mind is the supreme human faculty for the perception of Beauty; the senses are merely the instruments of the mind.

But there is another factor of the utmost importance, especially as the perception of Beauty is concerned, and it is already contained in the definition of the schoolmen. The Beautiful is that which delights the sight, the sense. A thing delights you when it arouses in you a feeling of pleasure, when it stirs your emotions. Is that not so?

Paul KODE:
Sure.

Dr. FONLON:

Therefore, Art, whatever be its form *must* arouse a feeling of pleasure in the emotion of the perceiver.

Therefore, there is a great deal of the subjective in the appreciation of art: what whips one fellow into ecstasy will leave another completely cold. One damsel will drive a fellow crazy with love, while others stand against, bewildered, seeing nothing in her that should produce such an effect on a man.

Therefore, in the appreciation of the Beautiful, opinions will often differ diametrically, radically: a work hailed as a masterpiece by some will be roundly denounced as bilge by others. That is why a famous Latin saying counsels tolerance in this domain: *De gustibus et de coloribus non est disputandum*. There should be no quarrels over tastes and colours.

Paul KODE:

Right. But permit me to ask you this. You say that, before an object of beauty, one person can be stirred whilst another remains cold; that there is a deal of subjectivity in the appreciation of Beauty. Is it then true what some say that beauty is in the eye of the seer?

Dr FONLON:

True but not completely. Yet, before, I answer your question, let me stress one point. In order to appreciate Beauty fully in appreciable measure, we stand in need of Training, Education. See how many years of preparation are needed before a student can really understand and appreciate Literature. Any African niner will gracefully dance to highlife or a merenge. But it takes years of training of ear and mind before our African nine-year-old arrives at the point where he can fully enjoy Beethoven, not to talk of Wagner. In spite of years at music, Richard Wagner still leaves me cold and confused. Yet Hitler used this weird, stormy music to whip the Germans up into frenzied, fanatical nationalism!

Often the beauty is there in the thing, but the perceiver may see nothing, because sense and mind and feeling are untutored. That is what aesthetic education, training in the appreciation of the Beautiful, is all about; that is why this cultivation is so necessary in the upbringing of youth. If this culture

is neglected, a young man, for all his book-learning, may remain very uncouth, a philistine.

To answer your question: saying that beauty is in the eye of the beholder is true to a large and necessary extent but not completely. The thing that is beautiful must possess certain objective qualities.

First of these is Truth: a thing must exist to be beautiful; it must be what it ought to be. must be itself, to be beautiful.

A man must be, must be a man, *qua* man, to be beautiful; a tree, *qua* tree to be beautiful. Plastic roses are beautiful as plastic roses but not as real roses. The False, the Lie, cannot be beautiful.

Secondly, for a thing to be beautiful it must be good, in the metaphysical, philosophical, all-embracing sense of the Good. *Bonum ex integra causa* (so the Schoolmen assert) *malum ex quocumque defectu*. The Good is that which is whole or complete, evil that which has any defect whatsoever. Evil in the moral sense they define as: *Carentia rectitudinis debitae*: the absence of necessary rectitude. Therefore, for a thing to be beautiful, it must possess its being in fullness, must be developed fully in all the dimensions that it normally should have, should be void of defect. A dwarf in the country of Lilliputians may be beautiful, but certainly not in this world of men as we know them. But the heavyweight prize-fighter, Mohammed Ali, towering six foot and more is great – or the greatest, as he proclaims himself to be. Fullness of being, of development, is one of the fundamental qualities of Beauty.

In the third place, if a man be of the normal height, but if he has a huge big head, a narrow trunk, and broom-stick limbs, would you regard him as a handsome man.

Paul KODE:

Certainly not: a huge big head, narrow chest and broom-stick limbs do not seem to fit proportionately together.

Dr. FONLON:

Proportionately – that's the word. For beauty of form, there must be due proportion in the disposition of the parts of a whole. Talking about proportion, suppose a man with a leg lame, with one hand, on the same side, withered, one side of his head bigger, you would certainly not consider him beautiful, would you?

Paul KODE:

I would certainly not, because one side of his body is smaller than the other.

Dr. FONLON:

That's right; his body lacks symmetry. A beautiful human form is bilaterally symmetrical, that is, if the body is divided into two halves from top to bottom, one half should be exactly the same as the other.

But tell me this: what line predominates in the shape of the body as compared with that of a house, for example the straight line or the curve?

Paul KODE:

The curve.

Dr. FONLON:

From what you see daily, all about you, which line is more beautiful, the straight line or the curve.

Paul KODE:

I would say the curve.

Dr. FONLON:

Precisely. I once heard a learned Professor of Moral Theology declare that the human body is the most beautiful thing in the physical universe. I believe he was right. And another Philosophy Professor also said. the curve is the line of beauty. The point needs no belabouring. The charming colleens you see all about you are sure ample evidence.

Paul KODE:

Certainly. I guess that is why in beauty contests they make so much of vital statistics, meaning the measure of curves deemed of special importance in the beauty of a shapely anatomy.

Dr. FONLON:

Talking of beauty contests, suppose a would-be queen had all the qualities we have mentioned but if there was no sheen to her skin, that is, if it was not shining and bright, if it had no brilliance, be she as white as ivory or black as ebony, would she win the prize.

Paul KODE:

Certainly not.

Dr. FONLON:

I would like to stress this point that sheen is not the exclusive property of a special colour: every colour can have its sheen, white or black. Ivory has its sheen, so has Ebony. For centuries the white man perpetuated the myth that only white was beautiful. And yet! They could not resist the charms of their ebony female slaves. The existence of millions of mulattos in the New World is not the work of black men who, for centuries were slaves, but the work of lustful whites whom Dr DuBois, in *Dark Water*, castigates as “shameless breeders of bastards”.

Yes the myth must be butchered and buried for ever. Beauty is not the exclusive property of the white race; it is the property of all races. I have travelled far and wide, and some of the most beautiful women I have seen were black. Some of the white on the contrary are sheerly unsightful.

There is a striking story that many readers of the Bible gloss over, or fail to notice. Solomon, it is said, had seven hundred wives, but the one about whom he wrote his most celebrated poem – *The Canticle of Canticles*, or *The Song of Songs* (as they call it today) – was black!

In that poem, she says, *Nigra sum sed Formosa*, I am black but beautiful. I would have preferred her to say: *Nigra sum et formosa*, I am black *and* beautiful. It is time some Negro scholar wrote a learned and forceful book on the Black Aesthetic – a theory of black beauty.

For the falsehood that only white is beautiful has been drummed into our ears for so long that we have come to believe in it ourselves. And thus you find among certain Negroes this strange phenomenon: the Negro’s negrophobia! The black man’s hatred of himself! And some spend whole lives trying to escape from themselves, spend whole lives aping the white man as the quintessence of human excellence – which he is not, emphatically.

I hope we have said enough to show that objective external criteria do exist for the evaluation of at least, physical beauty, have we not?

Paul KODE:

Yes we have.

Dr FONLON:

And if you were a member of a panel for the choice of a beauty contest queen you would now have an objective, or philosophical approach to the making of your choice, won't you?

Would you choose one merely because she came from your part of the country or even because you were madly in love with her, that is, if you keep a cool head in spite of your crazy heart?

Paul KODE:

No, I would not.

Dr. FONLON:

What would guide you in your choice?

Paul KODE:

First, the first principle you enunciated. Truth— the elimination of falsehood. For I have heard it said that some women wear padded breasts and padded thighs.

Dr FONLON:

No!

Paul KODE:

Such would be dismissed unceremoniously.

Dr. FONLON:

They should – out of hand. They are an embodied walking Fraud, a living Lie, in flesh and blood.

Paul KODE:

Secondly, you laid down fullness of being – the absence of defect, thirdly proportion, fourthly symmetry, fifthly perfection of curve and form, shapeliness, that is; and sixthly, sheen, or brilliance, of colour or complexion.

Dr. FONLON:

That's good. This, after all my prating, proves you have a retentive memory.

All this, you should remember, is true of physical beauty. But there are

other forms of beauty, higher even than mere physical excellence.

There is intellectual beauty – the beauty of noble ideas such as we seek from great teachers or from great works of world Literature.

There is moral beauty – the beauty of a great noble, selfless, generous character, the beauty illustrated in the lives of great, heroic, noble men.

In these cases as in the first, there is Truth, there is the Goodness, there is the magnitude and magnanimity that make the idea or the character stand head and shoulders above the common run, there is that Brilliance that dazzles our eyes, that dazzles our minds.

But in all cases – physical, intellectual, moral – the beautiful must stir in us a feeling of pleasure, as I have said *ad nauseam*.

But when the Beautiful surpasses the ordinary, we no more refer to it as the Beautiful.

It becomes the Sublime.

To illustrate what I mean, have you seen the big four-jet planes at Douala airport.

Paul KODE:

I have.

Dr. FONLON:

What do you think of their shape, their size, their symmetry, their colours?

Paul KODE:

Simply superb.

Dr FONLON:

For my part, in spite of years and years of flying, there is hardly a sight of which I never tire like seeing these planes take off. And when I first entered the Jumbo-jet with its rows and rows of seats, like pews in a church, with its three kitchens, an upper storey, three hundred passengers and more, my faith was shaken: I began to wonder if this church of a plane would take off the ground, and, this, after years of travelling by air. Tell me, when you see such a thing, especially when you see the tremendous energy with which it takes off; and when you think of the catastrophe that makes world news when one comes to grief, does it strike you merely as beautiful or has it something more?

Paul KODE:

Unquestionably; it has something more – tremendous force.

Dr. FONLON:

Tremendous force, tremendous energy – Or?

Paul KODE:

Tremendous power.

Dr. FONLON:

Good man! Yes, tremendous power! When the Beautiful is charged with tremendous power, like that of the jet or the tiger, it becomes the Sublime. Tell *me* this: when you see a lithe and lissome tiger in a cage in a zoo, does it fill you just with admiration, do you approach it with ease even when it is in a cage?

Paul KODE:

No, it strikes me with fear as well.

Dr. FONLON:

Well answered. That which is sublime arouses in us a feeling that is a blending of pleasure and fear, we are attracted to it but we feel, at the same time, like running away, like escaping from it. This blend of pleasure or admiration coupled with fear is the feeling that we know as *Awe*. A very important element to note in Literary Analysis and Literary Creativity.

It is not only physical phenomena like the enormous shapely fearful Jumbo, or the stunning sight or the Niagara, of the Victoria Falls or the Cameroon Mountain in tremor, in eruption, or the “aweful symmetry” of Blake’s “tiger burning bright” that evoke in us this feeling of reverential fear.

The “half naked kafir” (as haughty Winston Spencer Churchill dubbed Mahatma Gandhi) was worshipped by four hundred million Indians and by millions more the world over: he gave up all earthly wealth to devote himself completely to the struggle for Indian freedom, completely unarmed, the faced the matchless might of the British Raji: for decades until he fell under the bail of an assassin’s bullets he lived under unbelievable vows; his dramatic fasts to atone for the misdoings of the Indians, or to convert a blind and stubborn British Administration became legendary: here was a character

of extraordinary power, way up above the greatest of men, a character unearthly – completely out of this world.

And the world looked on – *with awe*.

And, finally, the Empire on which the sun never set surrendered to the ‘half naked kafir’. That was the Sublime: incarnate, the Sublime in the form of a human character – the Mahatma, the Great Soul, as unanimous India canonized him in his lifetime. That is a life you should study.

Paul KODE:

A life every Leader of men should venerate, should imitate

Dr. FONLON:

·As. we shall see more in detail, the Sublime exists also in Letters. That is why great Scriptures have held so many millions of men under their power and spell for so long – because of their powerful ideals and ideas. Sometimes mighty ideas are couched in such simple language that unattentive, unmeditative minds gloss over them, seeing nothing. Just imagine how many centuries it took man to discover fire, and how many centuries more it took him to arrive at electricity. Yet, when God decided to create light, a word was enough.

“And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light.” What could be simpler? A negro preacher put it more dramatically: “And God smiled and the light broke. And God said, ‘That’s good.’ “Here, is a great and grand idea narrated with stark simplicity. We shall see that, more often than not, the sublimest of ideas find expression in the simplest of words: “And God said to Moses: I am who am. He who is has sent you.”

Those who say: the profound – the obscure, are profoundly wrong, they are talking balderdash. However, in order to understand what Literature is we had to examine the notion of Art; and we discovered that all Art has one quality in common, namely Beauty. And we have just seen that there are two main degrees of the Beautiful – the ordinarily beautiful and the extraordinarily beautiful, or the Sublime. And we have seen their importance in Nature, in Life and in Letters. Is there any point you would like me to make clearer in so far as these notions are concerned?

Paul KODE:

Certainly. In talking about Literature you treated it only from the point of view of the root of the word. Can we now proceed to see what it is in itself,

since on this question we are striving to formulate clear, precise and distinct ideas?

Dr. FONLON:

Yes, that is what we will proceed to do. But, before that, we would need to know which are the Fine Arts and in what logical order we would classify them. We have already mentioned Painting and Literature, can you name the rest?

Paul KODE:

Music, Sculpture and, perhaps?

Dr. FONLON:

You are perfectly right. We have seen, therefore, Literature, Music, Painting, Sculpture and Architecture. Of these only two need to be defined for the benefit of our young listeners; for Sculpture, as we have seen before, is another word for carving; Architecture: is the art of building beautiful houses, or the art of the Beautiful in the building of houses.

Having known, at least, the most important of the Arts (there are others, like the motion picture the cinema for example) our next task is to classify them in some logical order. This is very important. And if there: are any students listening to us, let them take note of this important principle, namely, that, when you have a list of things to classify, you must look for a basis or principle on which to base your classification if you want the said classification to be scientific and philosophical.

Another point to remember is this: there should be only one principle for one classification. To classify men into black, white, yellow, red, Europeans, Africans, Asians would be to confuse things, for you have involved two principles- colour and geography; you should use either one or the other, according to the needs of your purpose.

There is another principle even more fundamental, and, it is this: a classification based on a principle that is intrinsic is far superior to that which is based on a quality that is extrinsic. Don't get frightened by these words.

The word intrinsic, *intrinsecus*, comes from two Latin words *intra*, inside, and *secus* from *sequor*, *sequi*, *secutus*, *sum*, to follow) meaning moving towards; moving towards the inside and away from the outside, therefore, on the inside, inward, within; not without, as implied the word *extrinsecus* (*extra*, *secus*), extrinsic.

An intrinsic quality is an essential quality, a quality which belongs to the nature of the thing itself, one without which the thing cannot exist.

An extrinsic quality is one which is external, accidental, not necessary for the essence and the existence of the thing.

A division of men into classes according to the quality of mind is more fundamental than a classification of men according to their shade of skin. A classification of men according to their character, into the wicked and the good, for instance is more fundamental than that based on geographical accident; for the weal or the woe of the world is determined, in the last analysis, more by whether leaders are good or wicked, than by whether they are Europeans or Asians. That of course does not mean that environment ecology does not have a part to play in the- shaping of men, in the making of the world. All I am saying is that there is a hierarchy in things based on intrinsic and extrinsic notes and that the intrinsic take precedence over the extrinsic. Am I making things clearer or am I making confusion worse confounded?

Paul KODE:

If we follow what you say, step by step, and keep it in mind, our ideas would become clearer.

Dr. FONLON:

I hope you are not saying that to please me. However, what we set out to do was to classify the Fine Arts in a logical order based on an intrinsic quality.

Paul KODE:

Yes, that is what we set out to do; and the listener would do well to give us an attentive ear.

Dr. FONLON:

Well, I have given the matter much thought and I think I have found an answer that satisfies me, at least, for the time being. It is a classification of these Fine Arts based on the number of dimensions that each possesses.

Paul KODE:

Dimension? Define.

Dr. FONLON:

The word dimension *comes* from the Latin *verb dimetior, dimensus sum*, I measure from or I measure out. From this Latin *verb* there is a Latin noun *dimensio dimensionis*, a measuring out, an extent or extension. And only matter can *be* measured, for only matter is quantified, only matter has *partes extra partes*, has parts beyond parts has extension, that is. Quantity, measurement that is what Mathematics is all about. In so far as the measurement of matter is concerned there are three dimensions: length, which gives you lineal measure: breadth which added to length, gives you a plane, a surface, an area: length and breadth and thickness or distance or depth give you volume. If there IS a fourth dimension which cannot be reduced to the first, the second or the third let the mathematicians tell us so. There may be; you cannot afford to be dogmatic in these days of spectacular discoveries. But for our purpose, namely, the classification of the Fine Arts, the three are enough in the meantime at least.

To my mind, since matter is essential to most Arts, I have classified them as follows according as the amount of matter in each diminishes: the Arts with two dimensions, the Art with one dimension and the Art with no dimensions.

Architecture and Sculpture are three-dimensional with only this difference that, in Architecture it is the straight line which predominates more often than not, and, in Sculpture it is the curve, the line of beauty par excellence. So I would put Architecture first, and Sculpture second.

Painting, *per se*, has only length and breadth, although the skilful painter makes you see distance where there is really no distance at all, depth where there is none.

Music possesses only one dimension, that of length in time.

Literature *per se*, is the Art which deals principally with ideas, and ideas have neither length nor breadth nor thickness, they are devoid of matter, although, since they have to be spoken literary works acquire, through language, an accidental though necessary dimension of length in time.

I once wrote a poem many years ago and sent it to some young friends of mine. They liked it so well that they learnt it off by heart. Meanwhile I forgot all about it. Twelve years later, one of the young fellows visited me and with much excitement and delight, recited it to me. And wrote it down at my request. Thus I got it back. It had lived through the years in the young fellow's head.

Before writing was invented, all Literature was oral. If they split the head

of Homer, the Iliad and Odyssey would have been found nowhere therein. They acquired dimension when he spoke them, else they lived as measureless ideas, imponderables in his mind.

I am still racking my mind to see whether I can find a better classification, for Literature is complex to the point of being complicated. Hence all the jarring Babel of Critics. Yet tell me, are you convinced now that Literature deals, first and foremost, with ideas.

Paul KODE:

Yes, but if Literature deals principally with ideas, we have still got to answer the question - ideas about what?

Dr. FONLON:

The answer is simple: ideas about the Universe; the Universe as it exists in space; the Universe as it changes in time: the Universe as it develops in the mind of man. This gives us the three main kinds of literary composition, namely. Description, Narrative, Argument or Reasoning induction and the Syllogism.

For the moment let us be content with this that Literature deals with the Beautiful and the Sublime as manifested in ideas.

Paul KODE:

I am sure a concrete example will drive the lesson home, will ram it down – as you would say.

Dr. FONLON:

That is an easy matter: there are so many examples that the difficulty becomes which to choose. But I love a writer largely unknown here, but who is, perhaps, according to some weighty opinion, the greatest playwright the world has ever seen. I refer to the celebrated Athenian dramatist, Sophocles, (496–406 BC) who wrote, among several works, the renowned Theban Trilogy: *Oedipus*, *The King*, *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Antigone*.

Of Course *Oedipus the King* which Sophocles composed in the full pulsing maturity of his genius, has been considered by some literary analysts, including Aristotle, as the quintessence of tragic composition, the greatest play that ever was written. Knowing no Greek, I became acquainted with these Theban Plays thanks to the Penguin translation by E. V. Rieu an Oxford Classical Scholar. Mr Rieu's version is so lucid, so moving that, to

me, it is a new creation. An English Classic on its own right.

I salute him.

In each play Sophocles tells us a story. And thus the ideas that strike us first are those of a series of dramatic events, of tragic characters that are the product of a particular environment, a particular history and a particular culture.

We are not struck at first sight by abstract, universal ideas, but by concrete events and persons and places and times.

We are not here listening to a dialogue of Plato, the Philosopher, coldly, though marvellously, expounding with his partners, directly, such abstract doctrines as that the best constitution is a mixture of monarchy and democracy, that in a healthy state governments should be subject to the law, that happiness and pleasure are two different things, not one and the same, that freedom of speech is the health of the state, that the things we see in this world are nothing but shadows of their perfect counterparts which really exist in an Ideal World.

In Sophocles we are bang up against the concrete world of tribulation and catastrophe.

Yet, behind these concrete events and people and places and times, lie principles or philosophical problems, elevated, sublime and as old as the world.

Furthermore, now and again, all the dialogues are enunciated in pithy, crisp and telling language, principles that would need a book, if each would be treated at length and in depth.

In the first play of the trilogy, *Oedipus the King*, Sophocles poses and gives his own answer to the eternal problem whether man can shape his destiny or is he helpless and hapless in the hands of Fate? Is there any escape from the doom that has been decreed? In other words, the eternal quarrel between Philosophers of the Free-Will School and those of the School of implacable Determinism.

The doctrine that underlies the second play *Oedipus at Colonus*, is that a person who suffers great tribulation, innocently and with willing submission, is the beloved of the gods, through whom other *men* may find redemption.

It is striking to note that this play first appeared four hundred years before Christ!

The third play, *Antigone*, lays down the principle that, if there is clash between two laws, a law of men and a law of the gods, it is the law of the gods, the law divine that must be obeyed:

*Of happiness the crown
And chiefest part
Is wisdom and to hold
The gods in awe,
This is the law
That, seeing the stricken heart
Of pride brought down,
We learn when we are old.*

Such is the verdict of the Chorus of Elders at the end of the play,
Antigone.

I hope you agree with me, from these three examples that Literature while presenting concrete facts and peoples and places and times can hold, concealed, for the attentive reader, elevated and sublime principles, and ideas, and ideals.

Paul KODE:

Yes, but you have not told us any of the concrete facts in these plays; what is the story in each case.

Dr. FONLON:

Ah, *yes*, you are right, but we cannot go into great detail; that would take too much time.

The first play tells the unearthly, horror story of Oedipus of whom the Delphic Oracle predicted, at his birth, that he was destined to kill his father and marry his mother and thus become father of children that were really his brothers and sisters. Everything was done to prevent events of such unspeakable foulness, but in vain.

In the second play *we see* Oedipus's daughter, a young fragile girl, defying, to the death, a decree of King Creon, Oedipus' successor, because she believes the decree Contravenes a divine law; and, for asserting as did the Apostles, over four hundred years after, that "we must obey God rather than men", she is condemned to be buried alive. And so she is.

You must rest content with these brief summaries. If you want to delve into these deathless plays, place an order, today, for a copy of *The Theban Plays*, by Sophocles. The Penguin Books Ltd., Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England! It is a slim paper-back and will cost only a few hundred francs. But I swear, you will find it a priceless treasure, that is, if you are an ardent lover

of Letters. I think PresBook in Victoria can get one for you.

Paul KODE:

I hope PresBook are listening. They will find readers and buyers aplenty' especially after this, if they stock this book.

Dr. FONLON:

I earnestly urge to do so, and I will make each of my students buy a copy. Students and PresBook I hope you have heard.

Paul KODE:

You also said that these plays are spangled with sayings weighty with meaning, deep in insight.

Dr. FONLON:

Yes I did and I will proceed to give some extracts containing ideas of unparalleled beauty about Statesmanship, Ethics, Philosophy, Theology, priceless principles of life.

But before I do so, you must first make a profession of faith as a Bishop has to do before he is consecrated, (as we used to say before) or ordained (as they say today).

Do you believe that the fundamental principles I have culled from the Theban Trilogy of Sophocles have magnitude and magnanimity; are weighty and sublime?

Paul KODE:

Let me hear them again those fundamental principles.

Dr. FONLON:

Do you believe that there is a genuine case for the doctrine that man can shape his destiny, that he is responsible for his acts; but do you believe also that the gloomy gospel that there is no escaping the doom that has been decreed, cannot be lightly dismissed?

Paul KODE:

I do; for it is obvious that there is a large part of our life which escapes our control completely: who we are *where* we were born, when, by whom, when we shall *die* even the course of our life - these are things over which we

have no say.

But, on the other hand, if you completely deny freedom and responsibility, you must follow up logically and scrap human effort, and scrap the schools, and scrap government, the laws, and the jails. And chaos will take over.

Dr. FONLON:

Do you believe in the salutary effect of suffering willingly embraced, however excruciating; do you believe with firm conviction that such suffering is a purifying force which brings us nearer to perfection, to God, and is a sure earnest of redemption for the Individual and for Society ?

Paul KODE:

I do; though it looks rather a grim and gory gospel.

Dr. FONLON:

A sublime doctrine, you mean. If you have read a faithful account of the Life of President Lincoln and how his agonies saved the United States from falling apart, you would unhesitatingly answer: I do.

However, do you believe, as Antigone and the Apostles said, that we must obey God rather than men? Do you believe as Plato laid down, over two thousand years ago, that the Law is above the rulers; that might is *not* right; that ministers are servants of the citizens; “that the State in which the Law is subject and has no authority is the highway to ruin, but that the state in which the Law is above the rulers and the rulers are the inferiors of the Law, has salvation and *every* blessing which the gods can confer?”

Paul KODE:

I do; most firmly and fervently.

Dr. FONLON:

Do you believe, then, that ideas beautiful and sublime, ideas *of* magnitude and magnanimity are the essential material of great Literature?

Paul KODE:

Unflinchingly.

Dr. FONLON.:

Good. Yes, we can now go on to see some of the ideas of unparalleled beauty with which these plays are spangled.

In *Oedipus the King* a priest demolished the theory of the Divine Right of Kings propounded, centuries later, by James the First of England, by telling King Oedipus:

*If we come to you now, Sir, as your suppliants,
I and these children, it is not as holding you
The equal of the Gods, but as the first among men,
Whether in the ordinary business of mortal life,
Or in the encounters of man with more than man.*

The King is the first among men, not the equal of the gods. And on earth man often finds himself in strife with forces that are “more than man”.

In another passage he states almost in passing:

*To help his fellow-men
With all his power is man's most noble work.*

Further on he lays down a principle without which there can be no justice;

*I impute no guilt
Until guilt is proved.*

Think how many hundreds of thousands of innocent men, the world over, have lived in misery, languished in jails, suffered excruciating torture, been done to death, because this simple principle has been ignored by those who wield power but who are prepared to believe the wildest rumours’ spread abroad by wicked tale-bearers against the innocent.

Paul KODE:

Indeed, in the light of these facts, this principle is seen as one of tremendous and enormous proportions.

Dr. FONLON:

In another passage, in a heated dispute with Creon,
Oedipus proclaims:

"Kings must rule,"

And Creon hits back:

"Not when they rule unjustly."

Here is the corner-stone of all good government. But listen to this:

*He that is a righteous master of his house
Will be a righteous statesman. To transgress
Or twist the law to one's own pleasure, presume
To order where one should obey, is sinful
And I will have none of it.*

*There is no more deadly power than disobedience;
States are devoured by it, homes laid in ruins,
Armies defeated, victory turned to rout*

*Surely, to think your own the only wisdom
And yours the only word, the only will,
Betrays a shallow spirit, an empty heart.
It is no weakness for the wisest man
To learn when he is wrong, know when to yield.*

*I think, for all my young opinion is worth,
That, good as it is to have infallible wisdom,
Since this rarely found, the next best thing
Is to be willing to listen to wise advice.*

In another heated exchange between Creon, now King and his son
Haemon you find the following dialogue:

*Creon: I am king and responsible only to myself
Haemon: A one-man state? What sort of state is that?*

Creon: Does not every state belong to its ruler?

Haemon: You'd be an excellent King – on a desert island.

These are excellent principles which would foster judicious statecraft and further the weal of the world. Unfortunately, all is woe wherever you turn, because these principles are spurned. Remember Watergate? There are Watergates everywhere, but unfortunately for wily Nixon, freedom of speech verging on the absolute, is entrenched in the American constitution. Other Nixons, elsewhere, crush the first man who dares as much as murmur.

Paul KODE:

Indeed these principles sound as if they were written, today and not for four hundred years before Christ.

Dr. FONLON:

That is the hallmark of great Literature – it is true for all time, it is deathless, because it is based on the *Philosophia Perennis* –on Timeless Philosophy.

We have seen statecraft, statesmanship; now let us look at another domain of learning – Religion and Morality. Are you ready?

Paul KODE:

All ears!

Dr. FONLON:

Then hear this:

*I only ask to live, with pure faith keeping
In word and deed that Law that leaps the sky,
Made of no mortal mould, undimmed, unsleeping'
Whose living godhead does not age or die.*

*Pride breeds the Tyrant; swollen with ill-found booty,
From castled heights, Pride tumbles; to the pit
All footing lost. Zeal, stripped for civic duty,
No Law forbids; may God still prosper it.*

Who walks his own high-banded way, disdain

*True righteousness and holy ornament;
Who falsely wins, all sacred things profaning;
Shall he escape his doomed pride's punishment?*

*Shall he by any armour be defended
From God's sharp wrath, who casts out right for wrong;
If wickedness for virtue be commended,
Farewell sweet harmonies of sacred song.*

Here you have, in solemn poetry, high principles of morality based on Religion stoutly defended by an ancient writer long before Christianity, a writer whom some would dub as heathen. Curious thing. Have you a Bible?

Paul KODE:
Yes I have.

Dr. FONLON:
When you go home today read Psalm.13 (74 in some versions) and you would find that the God-inspired poet is saying exactly the same thing in substance, as the heathen dramatist.

Paul KODE:
Are you imputing that Sophocles was not inspired as well by God.

Dr. FONLON:
I would say *he* was; all Truth comes from God. *Every* genius so sublime must have had that precious gift which has been called with deep reverence the *Afflatus Divinus* or the *Afflatus Divini*, that rare gift given to few: a breath, a breathing on, an afflatus of the Divine; a communication of supernatural knowledge, a divine impulse. A rare poetic inspiration, a share in God's creative genius. It is as though God breaths on them and infuses into them, through that breath the power to share in his endless work of the making of the world.

Paul KODE:
They must be a special group especially set apart.

Dr. FONLON:

Those who are really so set apart would be too humble, too self-effacing, to arrogate to themselves that honour. The greatest geniuses are the humblest men, for, knowing so much, they are keenly conscious of their limitations. Moreover, the creative genius of more than normal worth is, more often than not, a man dimly acquainted with grief. The process of creation is sometimes as agonizing as the travail of childbirth. Still the creative genius of more than ordinary powers is a man apart.

However let us leave this dissertation and return to our subject. I was giving you examples of lofty principles embedded in a concrete work of art and we were looking at some examples of moral, religious doctrine in Sophocles.

Paul KODE:

Exactly, that's where we branched off.

Dr. FONLON:

Let's have one more example in this category:

*Wonders are many on earth, and the greatest of these
Is man, who rides the ocean and takes his way
Through the deeps, through wind-swept valleys of perilous seas
That surge and sway.*

*He is master of ageless Earth, to his own will bending
The immortal mother of gods by the sweat of his brow,
As year succeeds year, with toil unending
Of mule and plough.*

*The rise of language, the wind-swift motion of brain
He learnt; found out the laws of living together
In cities, building him shelter against rain
And wintry weather.*

*There is nothing beyond his power. His subtlety
Meeteth all chance, all danger conquereth.
For every ill he has found a remedy
Save only death.*

*O wondrous subtlety of man that draws
To good or evil ways! Great honour is given
And power to him that upboldeth his country's laws
And the justice of heaven.*

*But he that too rashly daring walks in sin
In solitary pride to his life's end,
At door of mine shall never enter in
To call me friend.*

Here we are right in the centre of philosophical inquiry – the place of man in the universe. Sophocles said what Alfred Lord Tennyson affirmed, centuries later, that man, on earth, is “*the roof and crown of things*”.

Notice here, as elsewhere, the stress on the truth that the Moral Law is supreme. Pride and sin are condemned without appeal. Notice, too, that the subject matter being so weighty and sublime the language is starkly simple – verbal ornament would be a desecration here. A ponderous subject demands a ponderous rhythm. But the last line which sums up the burden of each stanza is short – an iambic diameter – to make the main idea stand up, head and shoulders, clear.

Now, have we not piled up evidence weighty and vast enough to prove, through the Theban Trilogy, that Literature is the Beautiful and the Sublime expressed, essentially, in ideas?

Paul KODE:

I would say we have.

Dr. FONLON:

Do you see how Plato, one of the greatest Philosophers, and Sophocles the greatest dramatist the world has ever seen insist, in their works, on the Primacy of Morality, on the Primacy of the principle that ‘holding the gods in awe’ is the crown of wisdom, that Pride, and Tyranny tumble into the pit, in the end, from’ castled heights; that the State in which the Law is above the rulers, and the rulers are the inferiors of the Law, has Salvation and every blessing which the gods can confer?

Paul KODE:
Yes, I have seen.

Dr. FONLON:
What then would you call people who in the making of duty-minded citizens belittle the role of Religion and Philosophy in their Educational system.

Paul KODE:
Unwise.

Dr. FONLON:
Unwise? You mean fools? Fools, frauds, knaves, that's what I say. And won't apologize. No! However, what were we talking about.

Paul KODE:
You were reading extracts from the Sophoclean Trilogy.

Dr. FONLON:
Then let us cite a few examples more to win over the doubters, if there are still any. Take this passage, in which the Seer Teiresias warns the head-strong Creon, the king, against blind wrong-headedness:

*Mark this, my son: all men fall into sin;
But sinning, he is not for ever lost
Hapless and helpless, who can make amends
And has not set his face against repentance.
Only a fool is governed by self-will.
Pay to the dead his due. Wound not the fallen.
It is no glory to kill and kill again.*

In some passages Sophocles shows a psychological insight that could only have been the fruit of mature observation:

*There is danger in unnatural silence
No less than in excess of lamentation.*

The same keen insight is shown in the following out-burst on the power

and danger of Love.

*Where is the equal of Love?
Where is the battle he cannot win
The power he cannot out match?
In the farthest corners of the earth, in the midst of the sea,
He is there; he is here
In the bloom of a fair face
Lying in wait;
And the grip of his madness
Spares not god or man.*

*Marring the righteous man,
Driving the Soul into mazes of son
And strife, dividing a house.
For the light that burns in eyes of a bride of desire
Is a fire that consumes.
At the side of the great gods
Aphrodite immortal
Works her will upon all.*

These plays are a very treasure trove: the lover of a good story will find delight, tearful delight, in them; the votary of deathless Literature, the Moralist, the Statesman, the Psychologist and even the Metaphysician will find therein rich food for thought.

Paul KODE:
The Metaphysician? Who is that?

Dr. FONLON:

If you read that booklet I addressed to Every African Freshman on The Nature, End and Purpose of University Studies you wouldn't show surprise. But, however, the Physical is that which concerns matter, that part of the Universe that has quantity that is capable of measurement that has such properties as motion, change, and energy. The science of Physics deals with these.

The prefix *meta* means *after*, *above*, sometimes it means *change* like in the word metabolism the process in the body through which the food you' eat is changed into living flesh.

Metaphysics means *alter-physics*, *above-physics*, *larger-physics*. It is the science which treats of the highest qualities or properties of all things, of the total Universe, material and non-material. It is the science which considers things purely from the standpoint that they exist, whether they are measurable matter or immeasurable ideas. For the material world is a real world, so is the world of ideas, the world of thought. The Schoolmen defined Metaphysics in three words: *Scientia de Ente*: the science of Being.

So when you pose the question: to be or not be? You are right in the heart of Metaphysics. To that question the overwhelming throng of the human kind says yes, and takes wives and dance when a child is born. But dissentient pessimist voices rise and jar against the mirthful clamour, and, among these, is the voice of Sophocles. He belongs, as a Philosopher, to the school of Pessimism. *Pessimum* in Latin means the worst, as opposed to *optimum*, the best. The pessimist believes that to be, to exist, is the greatest misfortune, and not to be, not to exist, the best of boons. An ancient Arab philosopher, Maari, belonged to this School, and in recent times, one of its most prominent standard-bearers was the German Philosopher, Schopenhauer. But every one of us is a pessimist or an optimist with each veering mood, with each turn of Fortune's wheel.

Paul KODE:

What did Sophocles really say?

Dr. FONLON:

*Show me man who asks an over-abundant share
Of Life, in love with more, and ill-content
With less, and I will show you one in Love
With foolishness.
In the accumulation of many years
Pain is in plenty, and joy not anywhere
When life is over-spent.
And at last there is the same release
When death appears,
Unheralded by music, dance or song
To give us peace.
Say what you will the greatest boon is not to be.*

The problem of man's predicament, what he is, where he comes from where he is going, the all-pervading human anguish, the nature of death, the hereafter – these are questions that have baffled men since the making of the world and will baffle them until it is no more.

Mark this: the *very* first act of the child, at the moment of birth, curious thing, is to wail; as though to lament his lot, as though to protest against having been born. Yet mother and midwife are anxious if the Plaintive cry does not come, as if this wail, this protest were the most natural thing at the dawn of life.

Why blame the Pessimist; the wail is the first act of the new-born babe, the groan the last of the dying man. Deep complex problems, and yet see with what simplicity, what simplicity of phrase this playwright couches them. We would have said: the man who loves a long life is a foolish man. Not so immortal Sophocles:

*Show me the man
in love with Life
in love with more
and ill-content with less,
and I will show you one
in love with foolishness.*

*Say what you will
the best of boons is not to be.*

I would give the world to write with such telling simpleness.

We set out to show, didn't we, first, that the essential substance of Literature is the corpus of ideas, that ideas, absolutely, in themselves, *per se*, (whichever you please) are non-material, imponderables, incapable of measurement, yet as real as the rocks; that the greatest literary works even when they are *mises en scene*, concrete before our eyes and ears, are meant, first and foremost, to instil in us ideas beautiful and sublime, ideas that delight us, overwhelm us, overawe us, stir us to tears. Have we succeeded in our aim.

Paul KODE:

Yes, if three plays on one immortal dramatist are enough evidence.

Dr. FONLON:

Indeed, one swallow does not make a summer, as they say in England; one dragon fly does not make a dry season, they would say in Nso. Still, you will remember that I mentioned the great Scriptures of the world. And there are other works without number, and, if you read them through, you would find that their overwhelming evidence vindicates my point of view.

I also said it, didn't I, that ideas, to be communicated must be expressed by signs, sometimes, but most naturally by words: words bring us back to ideas or concepts, and ideas recall external things. The total Universe, therefore, exists in a three-fold form: the world of extra-mental things, the world of ideas in the mind, and the world of language or words ' to use more learned jargon: the ontological world, the logical world and the world of 'verbal expression. World and thought and thing are therefore linked together by ties of internal intrinsic necessity.

We have talked about Literature and Thought, can we proceed to talk about Literature and Words and finally about Literature and Things?

Paul KODE:

Well, as you please.

Dr. FONLON:

Language is so important in Literature that it not only acts as the natural vehicle of ideas, but, as I have shown, there is Literature that is worth its weight in solid gold solely by the melody alone of its language; and consonants as well as vowels play a prominent part in this verbal music:

By the shore of Githie Gume,
By the shining Big-Sea – Water
At the doorway of his wigwam,
In the pleasant Summer morning,
Hiawatha stood and waited.
Bright above him shone the heaven,
Level spread the lake before him;
From its bosom leaped the sturgeon,
Sparkling, flashing in the sunshine.

From the brow of Hiawatha
Gone was every trace of sorrow,
As the fog from off the water

As the mist from off the meadow.

Hear this:

*For the moon never beams without bringing me dreams
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
And the stars never rise but I see the bright eyes
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee.*

And this:

*With many curve my banks I fret,
By many a field and fallow
And many a fairy foreland set
With willow-weed and mallow.*

*I murmur under moon and stars
In broambly wildernesses;
I linger by my shingly bars,
I loiter round my cresses.*

The rich varied long, open vowels, the repeated consonants, especially soft ones like *ls* and *ms* and *ns* and *rs*, and *Ws*, the blissful rhymes; the feminine endings. like *Gurnee*, *water*, *waited*, *morning*, *sturgeon*, *sorrow*, *fallow*, *mallow* - these are a veritable feast in verbal music and you do not need to understand the poem Of even the language, to join the jubilee.

Wielding the English language with the skill of a master music maker can become a very festival.

As for Literature and Things seen, felt, tasted, touched, scented, listen to this:

*The rose of youth was dew impearled,
But now it withers in the blast.*

Mark these lines from the song *Genevieve*. The idea is expressed not only by words but also by things.

Hear this from the Poet Mystic Francis Thompson:

*The fairest things have swiftest end,
Their scent survives their close;
But the rose's scent is bitterness
To him that loved the rose.*

*Nothing begins and nothing ends
That is not paid with moan;
For we are born in others' pain
And perish in our own.*

Paul KODE:
Yes, lovely, but sad.

Dr. FONLON:

Talking about Literature and words and ideas and things, what idea, in your opinion, is expressed in that snatch from the song *Genevieve*, which I quoted above?

*The rose of youth was dew impearled,
But now it withers in the blast.*

Paul KODE:
It conveys the idea of nostalgia for days gone by, of regret at seeing the beauty of youth blighted by age.

Dr. FONLON:

Well said. But the poet does not say it that way. Instead, he makes us *see* a rose covered by drops of dew, like beads of pearl, in the morning and the same rose withering in a *chilling wind*; rose, dawn, dew, pearls, the decay of old age, a withering wind - these are things you can see and feel.

Look at the Thompson rhyme, fairest things, swiftest and; the scent of the rose, a bitter taste, beginnings and endings, the pangs of travail, the agony of death: here are things we see and feel; but there is a new element: an appeal to the taste – bitterness.

Consider these lines by Grey

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,

The lowing herd wind slowly over the lea.

Here, again, there is an appeal to another sense, the ear tolling, knell, lowing.

The poet has more freedom than other artists – the sculptor, the painter, the culinary artist or cooker of dainty dishes, the perfume maker, the music maker, the maker of pillows of eider-down – because he can paint pictures which appeal to all the senses – sight, touch, and taste, the scent, the ear.

And this is one skill the poet reveals in-the painting of pictures for the delight of all the senses: while other artists can but appeal to one alone.

In this, Literature is set apart by one striking characteristic, namely, Literature, properly so called, is Concrete. Although its main purpose is to portray the beauty of ideas, it does so, paradoxically, by being concrete.

The Scientific writer, on the other hand, strains after language that is precise, abstract, colourless, and rigorously logical.

A logician would say, for instance: observation is the application of the senses of the accurate determination of natural phenomena.

The literary artist, for his part, endeavours to couch the highest thought by keeping closely in touch with the concrete world of particular persons and things and places and times; he has no desire to follow his scientific and philosophical colleague into the *use* of colourless and abstract universals.

Even when he cannot avoid the abstract, the poet in particular, or the maker of Letters at large, strives to make abstract concepts concrete by comparing them with things you can see and hear and touch and taste and scent. Thus he strives to *be* concrete not only by packing his work with concrete detail, not only by his ability to effect a *mise en scene*, to dramatize to appeal to all the senses, not only by picture-painting, but also by analogies or comparisons that we call similes (if we accompany them with the words *like* or *as*) or metaphors (when *we* omit like or as):

*For why should the spirit of mortal be proud?
like a swift-fleeting meteor, a fast-flying cloud,
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave
He passes from life to his rest in the grave.*

*Yes, hope and despondency, pleasure and pain
Are mingled together in sunshine and rain;
And the smile and the tear and the song and the dirge*

Still follow each other like surge upon surge

*'Tis the wink of an eye, 'tis the draught of a breadth,
From the blossom of health to the paleness of death,
From the gilded saloon to the bier and the shroud
Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?*

See how many details, similes and metaphors are used to convey the abstract idea of the brevity of life. Notice how the poet makes the words, hope and pleasure, despondency and pain, concrete by matching the sweet with sunshine and the sad with rain.

Have I succeeded in ramming the principle down that Literature is the art of ideas beautiful and sublime, universal, true of all places and times, but that, in expression, Literature strives to be concrete by appealing to all the senses ?

Paul KODE:

Yes, I think you have.

Dr. FONLON:

Whatever about our listeners and you, I am sure of one thing; I have convinced myself. Yet there remains one field that we have yet to explore.

Paul KODE:

What field?

Dr. FONLON:

This, namely the Purpose of Literature.

Cicero, the great Roman forensic orator, said that Literature has a threefold purpose; *docere, placere, movere*: to teach, to please and to move. For me, the over-riding purpose of Literature is to teach, even if it only aims at teaching words! I do not believe in art for art's sake – *L'art pour l'art*, as the French say. Art, to my mind, should be at the service of life.

And the writer strives to please, to make his lesson easier to learn' he stirs up so that readers should get up and do something about it. And the it is the idea, the problem he poses, the lesson he wants to instil.

So the Seer, the Writer, first and foremost, not a maker of mirth, not an aimless rabble-rouser, but a Teacher at large. And if you can teach by pleasing, why make the lesson unsightly to eye, a sore in the ear, a pain in the

neck, when you can make it easy on the eye, and music to ear and heart and mind? If you can make people rise up themselves and do things, why resort to birch and lash?

In any case, if you accept my view that ideas are the very substance and essence of Literature its very warp and woof, you must come along with me, all the way and accept this that the over-riding purpose of Literature is to teach.

To teach for what purpose? To make man on earth a better man, to make the world a better world. Ideas are about this twofold purpose, or they are about nothing.

And if your lesson is couched in dry-as-dust jargon, it will interest but a *few*. That is why highly scientific and philosophical language will interest a coterie of the initiate, and leave the teeming millions cold. That is why Stephen Langton's *Veni Sancte Spiritus* or Thomas Aquinas's *Pange Lingua Gloriosi* would mort' spontaneously put millions of worshipers on their knees invoking the Holy Spirit or adoring the Eucharist than would the most syllogistic disputations of the Schoolmen on the power of the Paraclete or on the Real Presence.

That is why *Oedipus the King*, well-acted, cannot but move even the hardest heart to tears because it fills us with overwhelming pity for man, for ourselves, because we see for ourselves the utter helplessness of man in this world. *We* become more compassionate towards each other. We say to ourselves, "If life alone is already steeped in so much anguish, why delight in heaping more woes on others?" *We* would become more kindly; and those in power, less heartless, when they see the doleful end, even of kings.

That is why I am all at one with Professor Herbert Grierson when he divides all Literature into the Literature of Knowledge or Scientific Literature and the Literature of Power, Literature properly so called. And it is with the Literature of power, Literature that not only teaches but pleases, that not only pleases but stirs our deep-most feelings and rouses us to action; it is with this Literature that we are chiefly here concerned.

Literature is Literature, has power, is Beautiful, Sublime only when it pleases or moves the emotions; it is then that Literature teaches best.

Paul KODE:

Is this then the surest hall-mark, the surest touch-stone, the surest quality of Literature, that it rouses the emotions?

Dr. FONLON:

Unquestionably, if with Professor Grierson, you mean the Literature of Power. A Scientific equation or formula has tremendous power, too, mind you; it can wipe out Nagasaki, it can set man on the moon. But until it goes that far, it leaves us cold. Whereas when people see *Antigone* performed by master actors, they cannot help but weep and a King or President, stirred by it, will swear to become a statesman and not a despicable politician full of wile and guile.

An Irishman said something about this power of Literature to purify men. He is of the school of Aristotle, so am I, and I don't apologize for this to our modern Critics with new-fangled theories, which they can hold and preach so long as they allow me my right to remain old-fashioned and preach my old fashioned stand.

Paul KODE:

Old-fashioned! What do you mean by your being old-fashioned?

Dr. FONLON:

Well, there are those who say that the Theories of Plato and Aristotle and Horace on Literary Analysis are completely out of date, outmoded today. But I adore them, I live by them. For I have read wide and deep in the field of modern Literary Criticism, and, very often, I have found that some of the moderns say in high-sounding, esoteric language what has already been said by the Ancients, and said precisely, and said tersely, and said better.

I feast on the poetry of Lord Tennyson, Sir Walter Scott and Moore, the Irishman. And I fain would write like them. But I am told that modern poetic practice does not tolerate that form today. Then I read the moderns, and, by and large, they leave me unmoved – no rhythm, no rhyme and sometimes no sense! at least, to me.

If I started the study of poetry from modern poets, I am sure I would detest all poetry today like the plague. What surprises me is this that they tell you it is out of fashion to write like Tennyson or Scott. And yet they teach Scott and Tennyson and Shakespeare and Chaucer – what a folly! – even in junior School! and, more often than not, they do this without parallel courses on the poetic techniques that these masters used. So the students of today know little or nothing about Prosody and Orthometry.

For me, I believe with Cardinal Newman, that a study of an author should be accompanied by an effort to write like that author, for your study

to sink in and bear fruit. How can that happen, if you are grossly ignorant of or if you despise the very rules of that author's craft? All this new-fangled attitude doesn't just make sense to me. At least let it not speak *ex cathedra*, as though its own was the one and only doctrine. Gracious! there are people who staunchly hold that the teaching of grammar should be banned from the schools ! Tell me, where are we heading for? No scientific approach to the study and the practice of composition in school and college! This can only end, as the trend already shows, in ineptitude and mediocrity.

I am of the School of Socrates. I am of the School of Plato. I am of the School of Aristotle. I am of the School of the Schoolmen. Unashamedly Proud.

A colleague of mine, a Lecturer in Philosophy, and an erstwhile seminarian and priest, once told me, when I asked to take a hand in the teaching of Philosophy to the Anglophone students here, in the University of Yaoundé: "*D'accord*", said he, "*mais nous ne voulons pas du Scolasticisme ici.*" Queer answer from someone who had learned his Philosophy from the Scholastics, and should have known that beneath all Schools of Philosophy lies the bedrock of the *Philosophia Perennis*. And that is what they should inculcate in the teaching of Philosophy, before the student branches off into the School of his bent. Else he ends up with a head full and confused with all sorts of philosophical opinions but has not the slightest chance in the world of formulating an independent view, of becoming a philosopher on his own.

Such is my old-fashioned faith.

But I can also claim that I am modern. I am a fervent disciple of John Henry Cardinal Newman. I have twelve fat volume of his *Letters and Diaries*. I am a follower of Gustave Flaubert. I am a disciple of Professor Grierson. I feast on Giles Lytton Stratchey, the mocker and debunker.

Paul KODE:

But you are read and admired by many.

Dr. FONLON:

That sounds good. But the many are not as learned as the modern critics are. Moreover, here I am trying to make the notion of Literature clearer and more precise. Tell me, how many would listen? Teachers and students alike? Yet I am proposing to them not airy views, but an experience, tried out: a life I have lived as a humble votary of Letters.

I once defended *A case for Early Bilingualism* for this country. But, here,

who listened? It was only the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, and the Canadian Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, and Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau and the United Nations Schools that took note.

But we have wandered wide of our mark, haven't we? What was it again I was saying?

Paul KODE:

You were about to speak about an Irishman and the power of Literature to purify.

Dr. FONLON:

Yes, I will quote Peter McBrien, again and again to ram the lesson home. This is what he says:

People of fine intellect and of high culture and of generous instincts look out upon life and see it as a sad thing. They know that art, genuine art, must portray life. That which does not portray life is not art at all.

We are overwhelmed by the spectacle of sadness in life; then in drama. We are shown that this sadness binds us in a kind of brotherhood with all men and women. Our hearts are drenched in tears at the feeling that this sadness is the common Lot of all mankind. Thus the hearth is purified (says Peter McBrien).

He died long ago, but he deserves a hearing.

His works on Poetry and Drama are among the most lucid, among the most enlightening that I have ever read.

It is this purification of heart and mind through Literature that Aristotle called *Katharsis*. If you want to read more about this get Peter McBrien's book - *Higher English Drama*. You can get it from the Intermediate and University College, 109 St Stephen's Green, Dublin. There is another on Poetry. They would be a priceless, fruitful investment.

After this conversation with you, Paul, I have acquired ideas more clear and more precise' about Literature; I am now more convinced than ever before that Literature is the Beautiful and the Sublime in the expression of ideas, that the Literary Scholar's mission is to teach, that he teaches best when he moves both mind and heart and will, that he cannot stir others unless his mind and heart and will are also stirred, *Nemo dat quod not habet*: no man can give what he has not. For the poet – taking him as the highest embodiment of the Literary artist - should be more concerned, not merely with things 'as they' are in themselves, but with things as they bestir his mind and heart. He too, to use McBrien's words, must be a man *of fine intellect, high culture and generous instincts*.

God made the world but he gave to the Seer, the Thinker, the Scholar, the Writer, the Power to make a better world. Is this not a work of highest privilege to do for the human kind?

Paul KODE:

It certainly is.

Dr. FONLON:

That is why, as I said before, makers of great Literature have been believed, time out of mind, to be blessed with what the Latins called the *Afflatus Divinus* or *Afflatus Dimni*; from *afflo* (or *adflo*) *afflare, afflavi; afflatum*, to breath upon. Just as God breathed upon Adam and he became a living soul, just 'so God breathes upon some chosen souls and they become, through their work, partners with him in the continuous work of creation. He gives them the gift of divine inspiration – that *Afflatus Divinus*.

Mind you, you cannot tell whether you have that gift or not unless, after the first stirrings, after the first promptings, within you, you observe and observe and study and study and practice and practice, and drudge and drudge!

Dr Cornelius Holy, M.A. Ph.D., the Professor who initiated me into Philosophy dinned it ceaselessly into our ears that genius is nothing but an infinite capacity for taking pains, that it is one-tenth inspiration and nineteenths perspiration, that he who would succeed, in any enterprise, must shun delights and live laborious days. And this is truer still of him who would influence society by his pen. Isn't it worth the trouble?

Paul KODE:

It is certainly worth the pains.

Dr. FONLON:

It is an uncommon privilege this: to be partner with God in the making and the shaping of men, in the making and the shaping of the world.

This book brings together six seminal essays by Professor Bernard Nsokika Fonlon, essays first published mostly in the 1960s in *ABBIA (Cameroon Cultural Review)* and in the pages of leading newspapers in Cameroon. Preoccupied with the cultural dignity, humanity and freedom of Africa and Africans, Fonlon never contented himself with stating the problem. In a very Socratic and scientifically systematic approach, he proposed solutions as well. Patiently pedagogical, philosophical and steeped in the classics he convinced his readers through the force of argument. In “The Task of Today;” Fonlon invites Cameroonians and Africans to face the challenge of nation-building and development in a world where imperialism is far from dead and buried. “Random Leaves from My Diary” shares his aspirations and challenging experiences as a young seminarian learning to be relevant to God and the Catholic Church. In “Will We Make or Mar” Fonlon is worried, and indeed frustrated, by the temptations of material pursuits and the love of money threatening to derail modern elites charged with the postcolonial destiny of African nations. As a member of the Cameroon National Union, in “Under the Sign of the Rising Sun,” Fonlon preaches patriotism and compromise. In “Idea of Literature,” Fonlon expresses his passion for art as the pursuit of beauty and the sublime, stressing, as he was wont to do, that no race or culture has a monopoly of this aspiration. “A Case for Early Bilingualism” invites Cameroonians to take advantage of their English and French linguistic colonial heritage, by embracing bilingualism in early childhood and playing a major role in an interconnected world where interpretation and translation are eternally needed.

PROFESSOR BERNARD NSOKIKA FONLON was born 19 November 1924 in Nso, in the North West Region of Cameroon, and died 26 August 1986. He rose from humble origins to become one of Cameroon’s most famous sons. He was a scholar, a poet, a politician, a philosopher, a man of action and a man of courage. He communicated, with style, in half a dozen world languages and also used Pidgin English. He moved in opulent circles and collected not money but hearts – of those who got to know him. Bernard Fonlon did not leave a worldly legacy to his family and friends and country. He left much more – ideas that can never be buried and ideals that will challenge new generations.



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